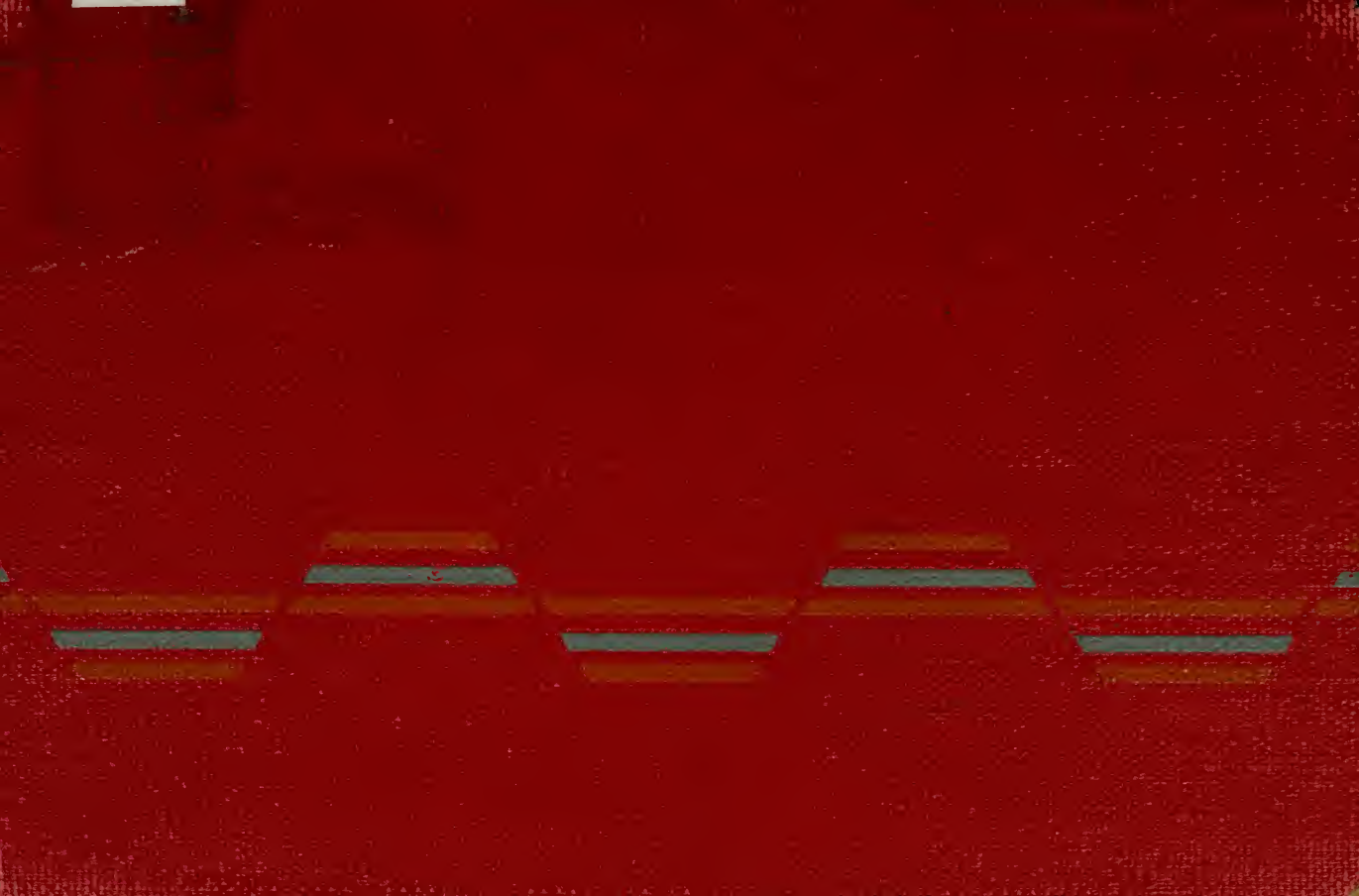


NY PUBLIC LIBRARY THE BRANCH LIBRARIES
3 3333 02484 4850

812.08
Baker
Plays of the 47 workshop;
2nd series.
MY
Drama

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | DYMX | 158685 | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
AT
LINCOLN CENTER
MY

Books circulate for four weeks (28 days) unless stamped otherwise.
No renewals are allowed

A fine will be charged for each overdue book at the rate of 10 cents per calendar day for adult books and 5 cents per calendar day for children's books.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/playsof47worksho00bake

# HARVARD PLAYS

## SECOND SERIES

EDITED BY

GEORGE P. BAKER

PROFESSOR OF DRAMATIC LITERATURE, HARVARD UNIVERSITY

[Baker, George Pierce ed.

# PLAYS OF THE
# 47 WORKSHOP
## SECOND SERIES

TORCHES
*By* KENNETH RAISBECK

COOKS AND CARDINALS
*By* NORMAN C. LINDAU

A FLITCH OF BACON
*By* ELEANOR HOLMES HINKLEY

THE PLAYROOM
*By* DORIS F. HALMAN

NEW YORK
BRENTANO'S
1920

*Copyright, 1920*
By Brentano's

THE·PLIMPTON·PRESS
NORWOOD·MASS·U·S·A

ONE ACT PLAYS
[redacted]
[redacted]
2484 4850
My.

Attention is called to the penalties provided by law for any infringements of the dramatist's rights, as follows:

"Sec. 4966: — Any person publicly performing or representing any dramatic or musical composition for which copyright has been obtained, without the consent of the proprietor of said dramatic or musical composition, or his heirs and assigns, shall be liable for damages therefor, such damages in all cases to be assessed at such sum, not less than one hundred dollars for the first and fifty dollars for every subsequent performance, as to the court shall appear to be just. If the unlawful performance and representation be wilful and for profit, such person or persons shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, and upon conviction be imprisoned for a period not exceeding one year." — U. S. Revised Statutes, Title 60, Chap. 3.

# PREFACE

The welcome accorded the first volume of *The 47 Workshop Plays* and its companion, *The Harvard Dramatic Club Plays*, was so hearty that a second edition of each was printed in January of this year. The increasing demand for more one-act plays from the same sources caused the publishing last June of *The Second Series of Dramatic Club Plays*, which has been as favorably received as the earlier volumes. The present collection is printed further to satisfy this demand.

These four plays — a fantasy, a costume comedy, a farce comedy, and a romantic tragedy — are in every sense genuine products of The Workshop. Written by members of the Workshop group — one play, *Torches*, from English 47 in this current College year; first produced by the Workshop; revised in the light of comment by its audience; these plays were ultimately selected from about a dozen as the four most highly approved by the audiences. Unlike their predecessors, they were not chosen from the many one-act pieces given by The 47 Workshop in some four or five years, but have all seen a first performance within the past twelve months. That there has already been considerable demand for



PROPERTY OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
58th STREET BRANCH

them in manuscript augurs well for their reception by the general public.

The growing number of presentations of such plays in settlement houses, schools, colleges, and experimental theatres is very encouraging, but a word must be said in protection of the authors. The chief reason why there has been in this country a larger number of really good one-act plays in the last few years is this: they could be written with some justifiable anticipation that they would be played repeatedly and bring in a small royalty each time. Few people, least of all young dramatists, can afford to write even one-act plays for free performance by anyone who cares to use them. There is, however, a curious feeling in many minds that because a one-act play is short it cannot have cost much labor, and that its author should be glad to have it given as often as may be desired without recompense. Though The 47 Workshop is always ready to consider special reasons why the usual small royalties required for presentation of the plays printed for it and The Harvard Dramatic Club should be remitted, it has found it necessary in almost every instance to insist on the regular fees. Only in that way can it insure a succession of other short plays likely to be as satisfactory to its public as the plays already published. This statement may, perhaps, save misunderstanding and disappointment in the future.

The Harvard Dramatic Club, resuming in the autumn of 1919 its activities interrupted by the

War, changed its policy, — at least for the present. It now leaves to The 47 Workshop the first production of all plays, long or short, by Harvard and Radcliffe playwrights. Instead, it will busy itself with foreign drama not likely to be seen on the professional stage by its audience. With *Erasmus Montanus* of Holberg and *Fame and the Poet* of Lord Dunsany it started successfully, last December, on its new policy. The publication of this volume marks, then, the merging of the two series, of The 47 Workshop and the Harvard Dramatic Club plays. The Workshop will continue to print its plays from time to time, as the demand for them persists and the standard set by the volumes already published can be maintained.

GEO. P. BAKER.

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
March, 1920

# TORCHES

## A PLAY IN ONE ACT

BY

KENNETH RAISBECK

## CHARACTERS

GISMONDA
ALESSANDRO
PIETRO
MADONNA GIULIA
TWO NEGRO BOYS

Originally produced February 5, 1920, by The 47 Workshop. Copyright, 1920, by Kenneth Raisbeck. Permission for amateur or professional performances of any kind must first be obtained from The 47 Workshop, Harvard College, Cambridge, Mass. Moving Picture rights reserved.

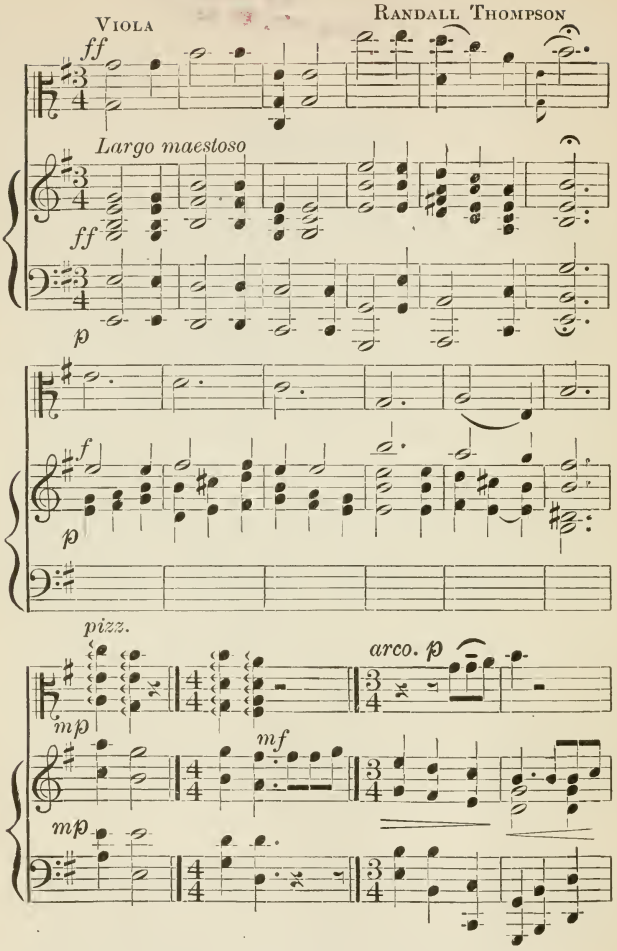
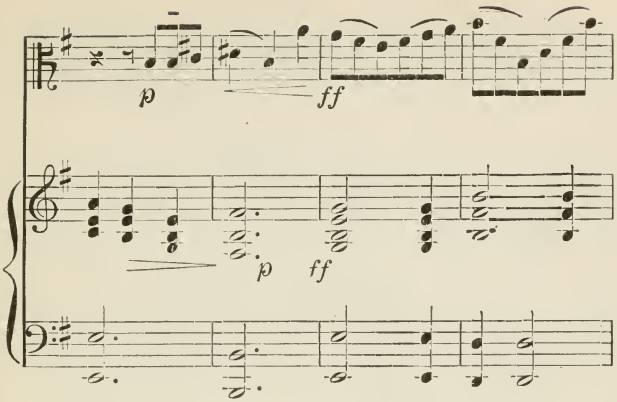
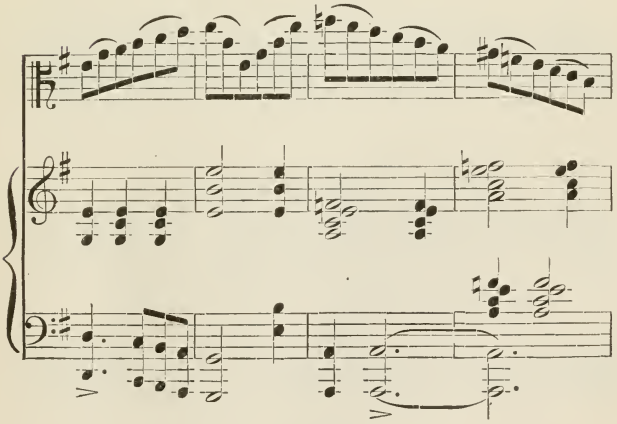
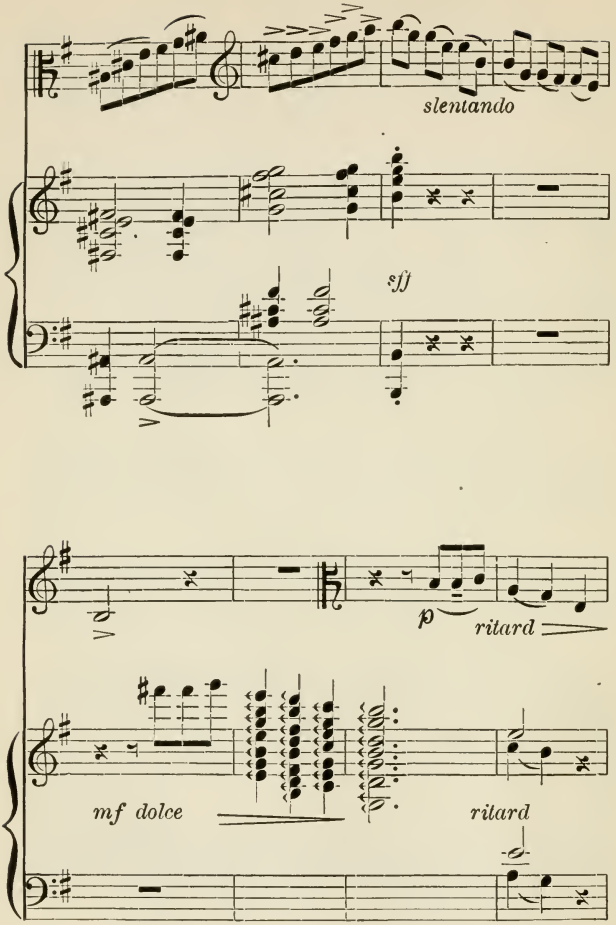
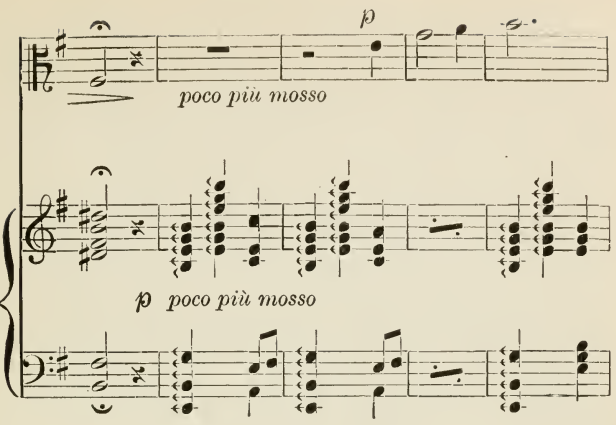
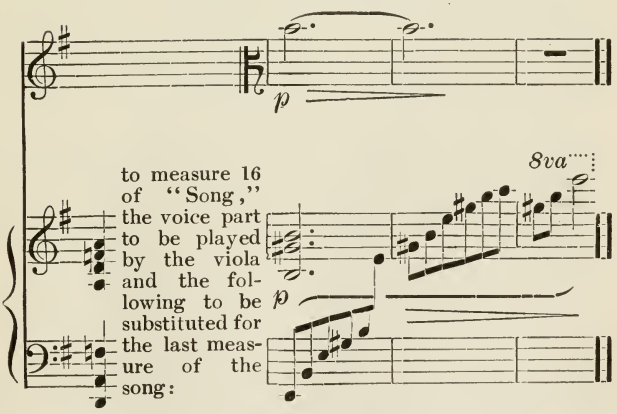
PROPERTY OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
[illegible] STREET BRANCH

My

# TORCHES

SCENE:[1] *An upper terrace walled on two sides by a low parapet, on the third — the right — by a side elevation of the castle which rises blank save for one door; this door stands open and a rectangle of gold light from within stretches before it. Over the parapet are seen the tops of cypress trees and Lombardy poplars; beyond loom cone-shaped hills; the deep night sky is pricked with innumerable stars. Three pillars of different heights rise from the parapet; each is hung with garlands of trailing flowers and crowned with a marble figure. At the back the parapet is cut into by two broad low steps which admit to a shallow curving balcony; this jutting balcony is a kind of look-out. The tessellated pavement of the terrace is laid with thick Turkey rugs. To the right stands a stone bench. To the left, under a rich canopy with curtains at back and side, a table is set; lamps and torches depending from the standards of this canopy spill a brilliant flood of light over this table. The rest of the terrace lies in luminous blue dusk.*[2]

[1] For the Prelude, specially written for this play by Randall Thompson Serp, see pp. 4-7. On the last notes the light laughter of Gismonda is heard continuing as the curtain rises.

[2] For a small stage the following set has proved more

Viola
Randall Thompson
ff
Largo maestoso
ff
p
f
p
pizz.
mp
arco. p
mf
mp

p
ff
p
ff

slentando
sff
p
ritard
mf dolce
ritard




to measure 16 of "Song," the voice part to be played by the viola and the following to be substituted for the last measure of the song:

*At rise of curtain there are discovered two men and a woman sitting at the table; they are nearing the end of dinner. The elder man is about forty-eight; his face is dark, handsome, sensitive, forceful; his eyes are resolute and keen; he is clean-shaven; he wears a small turban from under which his thin black hair curls on his neck; he is dressed with sombre magnificence in the costume of the Italian Renaissance, — more particularly, the last decade of the fifteenth century. This is the Lord Alessandro. The other man, Pietro, is about twenty-three; his face is strong, heavy with a kind of brooding passion, — the lips full and slightly pouting, high cheekbones, and sombre deepset eyes; a cruel, violent, beautiful face. He is clean-shaven; his thick, black, outstanding hair flows to his shoulders; he is richly and elegantly dressed. The woman, Gismonda, is an incomparably lovely creature of eighteen, with a full but small red mouth, a brilliant complexion, black eyes, and delicately arching eyebrows; her yellow*

practical: *An upper loggia of stone. In the left wall is a niche containing a statue. The right wall is cut into by a door, which stands open. At center back a great arch opens on a balcony raised two low steps; this balcony has a balustrade and is open to the sky; at rise it is screened by a rich curtain hung within the arch. On either side of this great center arch is a smaller arch which, because of the recessed low parapet, gives access to a kind of niche; in each of these two niches a negro boy is stationed. Against the right wall stands a stone bench. To the left of the stage is set a table, flooded with brilliant light from a hanging lamp above. Against right and left walls, two on each, are bracketed four torches; they glow dully, and dimly illumine the rest of the loggia.*

*hair, dressed with pearls and a heron's feather, curls in fine ringlets about her face. She is superbly gowned.*

*Two negro boys wait, the first with a gold pitcher.*

GISMONDA [*to Alessandro*] Shall you reach Brescia by midnight, my lord?

ALESSANDRO. By midnight, certainly. I have only to change my dress. My men are in readiness, and when the moon rises, we shall set out.

GISMONDA. Wine, Signor Pietro?

[*He is sunk in his thoughts, and does not hear her. She taps his arm with her fan.*]

Signor Pietro!

PIETRO [*starting*] Lady!

GISMONDA [*with a light malicious laugh*] Why, how you start!

PIETRO. Your pardon.

GISMONDA. Will you have wine?

PIETRO. Wine, thanks, lady. [*The first negro boy serves him.*]

GISMONDA [*turning again to Alessandro*] Shall not you and Signor Pietro travel a little way together?

ALESSANDRO. He goes northwards deeper into the mountains, and I southwest to the plains. We part here.

GISMONDA [*mockingly*] Alas! and alas! and alas! Come, Signor, must we go on our knees to keep you from this foolish journey?

PIETRO [*with finality*] I go my journey.

ALESSANDRO. Pietro understands.

GISMONDA [*with bitter playfulness*] He does not like our company, my lord. Well, why should we keep him moping here? He can only sit tongue-tied, with his face drawn down — [*Struggling with laughter*] drawn down like death. Let him go, I say — [*Rising; with sudden rage*] Let him go, and no more words about it! [*She sweeps toward the back.*]

ALESSANDRO [*in angry reproach*] Gismonda!

GISMONDA [*after a pause*] I am not myself tonight. The air is oppressive. Oh, draw back this curtain!

[*The second negro boy draws back the hangings along one side of the canopy.*]

Ah! . . . It is better now. Still my head burns. Let us have the iced confections. They may cool me.

[*She has come back to the table, and now strikes it twice sharply with her fan. The second negro boy goes out, and returns, after a moment, with a tray of sweets.*]

ALESSANDRO. You will break your fan, Gismonda.

GISMONDA [*ironically*] Then would I be inconsolable, my lord husband, since it is your gift.

ALESSANDRO. Were it only my gift, Gismonda, you should break it at your will. But I had it wrought for you by the Jew Ercole Fideli, and

there is no silversmith like him. Have you seen the fan, Pietro?

PIETRO [*indifferently*] No. my lord.

ALESSANDRO. Spread it wide, Gismonda. — Thin beaten silver plates, — you see? — and here a naked Love — just a young girl —

GISMONDA. I think her too thin.

ALESSANDRO. The wonder and tenderness in that face —

GISMONDA. I like my Venus in the antique fashion. They were digging up half Rome when I came away, and discovering such quantities of deep-breasted, round-limbed treasures!

ALESSANDRO. I call that Love a marvel.

[*Pietro laughs a fierce, short, scornful laugh. They look at him in surprise.*]

GISMONDA. Well, Signor?

PIETRO [*with a kind of rage*] Love! That child!

ALESSANDRO [*smiling*] Would you dispute the artist?

PIETRO. Oh, your artists, your lisping poets with their silver Aphrodites!

GISMONDA [*her chin on her hands*] Then what is love, Signor?

PIETRO [*leaning across to her*] A great fist squeezed about a man till his bones go crack! Or like that ruby on my lord's hand, that balass ruby which he cherishes so dearly: Put your lips to it, and you are poisoned!

ALESSANDRO [*with low emphasis*] Take care, Pietro!

[*Pietro turns to him sharply. To cover his warning:*]

This wine is heady.

GISMONDA [*in garrulous relief*] Aye, it is the strong wine of Malvasia, red as the ruby you liken to Love, Signor, the ruby my lord will give me before long.

ALESSANDRO. It is well you wear no jewels, Pietro. She is for wheedling the very rings from my fingers.

GISMONDA. Not your other rings, my lord. Only the ruby. Mind you, I have lived at the court of Rome, but this ruby is larger and more perfect than any I saw there. Not even the peerless Madonna Lucretia Borgia . . . to think that only ten months since I was her maid of honor, unmarried, and in such gaiety . . . not even the magnificent Madonna Lucretia has such a ruby. Please give it me?

[*Alessandro smilingly shakes his head. She strikes the table a sharp blow with her fan.*]

Wait! Somehow it shall be mine!

PIETRO. Lady, do you gain everything on which you set your desire?

GISMONDA [*promptly*] Everything!

[*A pause; with deep conviction*]

Everything!!

[*A pause; with a curious little smile*]

You do not, Signor?

PIETRO. Men do not — honorably.

GISMONDA. Honorably . . . h'm! Says your picayune down-at-the-heels nobility: "I have lost everything but my honor!" Honor! A word for broken men! Cold comfort for those who lack cunning to outwit or strength to beat down their enemy!

ALESSANDRO [*harshly*] There speaks Rome!

GISMONDA [*insolently*] There speaks the world, my lord, since the world is Rome. [*Raising her arms in sudden passionate longing.*] Would God I were there!

[*She sees the two men staring at her, laughs nervously, and says:*]

Do you like this confection?

ALESSANDRO. It is delicious.

GISMONDA. For three miserable days I have been laboring with your cook — stupid lout! — that this farewell supper might reward you and Signor Pietro for giving *me* [*with an ironically sentimental inflection*] your last hours together!

ALESSANDRO. This is no death feast. Pietro will return from Germany as surely as I from the races at Brescia.

GISMONDA. If he offer to stray but five paces toward Italy, his wife will clap him in irons.

PIETRO [*astonished*] My wife? [*She breaks into a peal of laughter, and nods. Angrily*] I go to Germany to make my fortune, not to get me a wife!

GISMONDA. But you will marry there, Signor. [*He makes an impatient gesture of negation. Mysteriously*] The German women are such witches! They cast a spell by their ugliness!

ALESSANDRO. The Lord Duke of Ferrara got him a wife out of Germany, and he was well served.

GISMONDA. How's that, my lord? She bore him three hunchbacks! Do you call that being well served? — Oh, I tell you the Germans are barbarians and their women are scullions! Devils! They have no style! Signor Pietro will recover his good humor when he sees them. [*With a glance at him*] That is, if he go out of Italy with enough wit to see how ridiculous they are!

ALESSANDRO [*with a forced smile*] She is jealous of them, Pietro.

GISMONDA [*turning on him*] As jealous as if I were sending you among the hot Spanish beauties, who are all dwarfs and the color of mud!

ALESSANDRO [*smiling, but with purpose*] She would keep you here to tag after when she rides out on her jennet.

PIETRO [*sharply*] My lord!

ALESSANDRO. Who now will play prop to her book when she reads from the love tales of Godfroi de Bouillon?

PIETRO [*in anger; half rising*] You are pleased to make a fool of me, my lord.

ALESSANDRO. Why, how that jest touches you!

PIETRO [*doubtfully; relaxing*] Jest?

GISMONDA [*acidly*] Would it be else? Are you fit for anything but to carry a sword, shoot

an arrow, let fly the falcon, and follow the greyhound?

ALESSANDRO [*humorously crying out*] Now is her poniard out!

GISMONDA [*with increased bitterness*] To talk hours with my lord of the hunting of this year, last year, the year before last, and so on down to babyhood?

PIETRO [*humbly*] I have offended you? I am very sorry.

[*A pause. Gismonda looks at him, her anger dies, she just puts out her hand in a little unfinished gesture, and says in a low voice*]

GISMONDA. Offended! You!

PIETRO [*softly; with passion*] Lady!

[*There is a silence. Gismonda and Pietro sit staring at each other. Alessandro looks from his wife to Pietro. When he speaks it is in a cry that is sudden, hoarse, and instinctively savage. Pietro answers in the same fashion. The dialogue runs with increasing tension and speed till Gismonda's intervention.*]

ALESSANDRO. You, Pietro!

PIETRO. My lord!

ALESSANDRO [*rising*] We are done!

PIETRO [*leaping up*] You would have me go?

ALESSANDRO. For your good!

PIETRO. Speak more plainly! More plainly!

ALESSANDRO. A command?

GISMONDA [*rising*] Signor! My lord!

[*There is a pause. The two men relax. Alessandro puts his hands before his face a moment. He speaks hoarsely, with deep feeling.*]

ALESSANDRO. I am ashamed! Pardon, sweet lady! [*She inclines her head in acknowledgment, and sits.*] Pardon, dear Pietro! What should have made me speak — [*A pause. He controls himself.*] Indeed, I meant no offense. I was merely thinking of the four hours' journey you have yet to make — Pietro!

PIETRO [*still dazed*] I do not know what came over me. On the moment — something in your voice — [*Excited by the remembrance; in a hard voice.*] Yes, there!

ALESSANDRO [*gravely; with deep feeling*] You know I trust you as my brother. I love you as my son, Pietro. [*He puts out his hand.*]

PIETRO [*touched; taking his hand*] I know.

GISMONDA [*quickly*] Wine, Signor?

PIETRO [*sitting down*] Wine, thanks, lady. [*The negro boy serves him.*]

GISMONDA. My lord?

ALESSANDRO. Thanks, no wine.

GISMONDA. Saving wine, my supper — [*with a charming smile to both men*] in farewell to you is done.

ALESSANDRO. For your gracious thought of us, sweet Gismonda — [*He kisses her hand.*]

GISMONDA [*with the same kind and charming smile*] I must not hope to trespass longer on your time, my lord.

ALESSANDRO [*after a moment; politely*] Thanks. I'll go change my dress. — And Pietro?

GISMONDA. Signor Pietro is free.

ALESSANDRO. I have some last instructions for you, Pietro.

GISMONDA. Signor Pietro shall leave me — if he wishes.

[*A very short pause. Pietro rises.*]

PIETRO [*to her*] Pardon!

GISMONDA [*indifferently*] Oh, you must not consider me, Signor. [*Pietro bows, and starts towards Alessandro who stands by the door leading into the castle. He has half crossed the terrace, when she suddenly cries*] Why, he has not drunk his wine. — Pardon, Signor, and sit down!

[*Pietro has stopped, and now slowly turns his head to look at her, and he stands staring thus. There is a short silence, and then Alessandro breaks into harsh, ironic laughter. Pietro and Gismonda look sharply at him, and he says in a hard voice to cover his laughter*]

ALESSANDRO. You are going into Germany, Pietro, like a camel into the desert!

[*He goes out. Gismonda crosses the terrace and looks for a moment, with curious intentness, through the door after Alessandro. Pietro stands motionless, watching her. Then he goes slowly to the table, and moodily flings himself into his chair. Gismonda turns and regards him a moment, moves to the second negro boy, and taps him on the shoulder. He starts.*]

GISMONDA. Your eyes are heavy. Get you to bed, and dream of Nubia! [*Exeunt negroes. She waits till they are well gone, comes to table where Pietro sits, and leans against it, close to him, and says in a low voice*] When shall I give you supper on my terrace again, Signor?

PIETRO [*with an effort at lightness*] When I return.

GISMONDA. *If* you return. For you mean never to come back to us. Is that not true? [*He is silent; she nods her head sombrely.*] It is true. Ah. who now will talk with me in my garden? [*More lightly, but with purpose*] And who now will tag after when I ride out on my jennet? Who now will hold my book when I read from the love tales of Godfroi de Bouillon? [*He has risen, and draws in his breath in a sharp exclamation. She laughs softly.*] Yes, — so said my lord.

PIETRO [*despairingly*] It was a jest.

GISMONDA. Not five minutes since you and my lord each started up like a man wild to plunge his knife into the throat of the other.

PIETRO [*in a groan*] Madness!

GISMONDA. Knowledge, Signor! You have found each other out! You hate my lord, and he —

PIETRO. Enough!! [*She is cowed by his tone, and is silent.*] There may be a difference between my lord and me. That is for us to settle. In my heart I am unchanged. Any man who sought to bring hate between us I would kill. If I did not, with my memories, God help me!

GISMONDA [*mockingly*] What, Signor devotee! Shall you chant that litany again? How my lord gave you two Barbary horses, seven greyhounds for hunting, and five falcons, a suit of silver armor, and fifty men-at-arms to go with you to Germany?

PIETRO [*gravely*] I have greater things to remember — How when my uncle murdered my father and robbed me of my heritage, and would have murdered me, it was my lord who saved me. Ten years I have lived in his house. He has been my father, and an elder brother to me. Such strong bonds bind me to him — ! [*He breaks off, and after a moment adds, with deep conviction*] I know the duty owing to my lord.

GISMONDA [*throwing up her hands in rage*] Oh, duty! [*Enter Madonna Giulia, a short, fat woman of forty-five.*] My sweet Madonna Giulia! Come to coquette with the night wind?

MADONNA GIULIA. Aye, lady. Inside the air is close.

GISMONDA. Nymph, it is rheumatic here!

MADONNA GIULIA. A blessed holy palmer cured me forever of rheumatism with a drop of Jordan water for which I paid —

GISMONDA [*acidly*] Yes, I know. [*A pause. Madonna Giulia settles herself on bench at right. Pietro goes on the balcony.*] You are broidering?

MADONNA GIULIA. Aye, lady.

GISMONDA. Let me see your work. [*She crosses to Madonna Giulia, and after a glance*

*round at Pietro, says, in a low voice of fury*] When I wish you gone, how dare you settle here?

MADONNA GIULIA [*whimpering*] He sent me.

GISMONDA. He?

MADONNA GIULIA. My lord.

GISMONDA. My lord! How so?

MADONNA GIULIA. He came upon me where I sat broidering, and said: "Are you not the Lady Gismonda's matron of honor, come with her from Rome?" And when I said, "Magnificent and noble lord, I am!" — a thing which he knew very well — he said: "Your mistress is on the terrace," and stood watching me until I picked up my work, and came here.

GISMONDA. How did he look?

MADONNA GIULIA [*after a pause*] Sad. [*Conscious of an inadequacy; with a vague gesture*] But more than sad.

GISMONDA. Ah! [*After a moment; in a hard voice*] Well? You have come. That was his command. Now hear mine: — Get you back again.

MADONNA GIULIA [*in protest*] Lady!

GISMONDA. Are you in my service or my lord's? [*Madonna Giulia drops a frightened curtsey.*] Then go into my chamber there and watch for me, and give me warning when my lord comes. Serve me well tonight, and you shall ask what you please. Because tonight — [*She raises her arms, whispering*] This night. . . .

MADONNA GIULIA. Aië! Aië! Take care! He —

GISMONDA [*striking her hard across the mouth*] Go! [*Exit Madonna Giulia. She turns towards Pietro.*] Signor!

PIETRO [*He comes down to her.*] My lord is waiting for me. If you will excuse me —

GISMONDA. Not yet!

PIETRO. I must go!

GISMONDA [*in a low, bitter voice*] And leave me to all these middle-aged —? [*She breaks off, studies his unyielding face for a moment, and suddenly moves away from him, angrily crying*] Oh, why did I ever leave Rome? In Rome were plays, tourneys, masques, dancing. In Rome I was loved! In Rome there were men to whom my favor was of more moment than a cameo or a parchment! I am freezing here! Say my lord loves me: — Is it as a woman should be loved? Is it I who count always first with him, more to him than his whole world? Oh, I know that I have value! I count among his treasures! I adorn his museum along with other such treasures as this fan, that statue, or that, or that, or this tinted Murano glass! [*She holds up the wine glass.*] Yes, doubtless my rank is equal with this goblet! Or less exalted, for he got me gratis in Rome, with a dowry beside, while he got this crystal from Murano and paid a great price for it! And as for you, Signor — ! [*A pause. She lowers her voice, and finishes irrelevantly*] Why do you go to Germany?

PIETRO. To make my fortune.

GISMONDA. My lord would advance you here.

Still you go. So that is not your reason, and when you say it is, you lie. [*A pause.*] I know your reason.

PIETRO [*involuntarily*] No!

GISMONDA. Let me satisfy you. [*He puts up his hand in protest.*] Bah! You are afraid! [*She comes closer.*] You see that I know.

PIETRO [*despite himself*] I am glad!

GISMONDA [*triumphant*] Ah, then —!

PIETRO. It must not be spoken.

GISMONDA. You fear words? What of thoughts . . . when you would sin against your friend?

PIETRO. No! Fore God I love you — differently!

GISMONDA. So cold, Signor?

PIETRO. Cold? Christ! if I am eaten up, sick, mad — if I am struck down, shall I then strike down my friend?

GISMONDA. Hah! My lord again!

PIETRO. I have his trust!

GISMONDA. Are you stone? Do not you love me? Do not you love me? [*He is rigid, immovable, makes no sign.*] Oh, you fool! [*She sweeps toward the door, hesitates, looks cunningly round at him, pauses a moment, and turns to him.*] You think my lord trusts you?

PIETRO [*struck by her tone; imperiously*] He trusts me! I know him well!

GISMONDA. You *did* know him.

PIETRO. If we are less close, the fault is mine. I have not been open with him, whereas he has been

all patience. Even to my departure, though I furnished no good reason, he has put no hindrance.

GISMONDA. He has even given you every aid.

PIETRO. Yes. — He has. [*A pause*] What would you say to me?

GISMONDA. I think he knows everything. I think he is glad to get you gone.

PIETRO. You have seen him grieve.

GISMONDA. There's his cunning.

PIETRO. What need should there be of cunning between my lord and me? Always we have been honest with each other.

GISMONDA. Before he grew jealous.

PIETRO [*laughing*] Jealous? Pah! That's not his nature!

GISMONDA. It is the nature of a husband.

PIETRO. He jealous! My lord jealous! Come! I do not like this jest! [*A pause*] Ha! Would he then have left us two alone together? Answer that! [*She throws back her head, and laughs a long peal of laughter*] Why do you laugh? [*She laughs again*] You know something I do not?

GISMONDA [*mockingly*] Why, what do you know?

PIETRO [*with angry despair*] You are making game of me!

GISMONDA [*seriously*] When I pity you?

PIETRO. I want no pity! Only the truth! — Come! You know something which concerns my lord and me?

GISMONDA [*after a moment*] Yes.

PIETRO. Then you must out with it!

GISMONDA. Must?

PIETRO. Aye, must! For if my lord has betrayed me, if he distrusts me — ! [*He raises his clenched fist.*]

GISMONDA [*sanctimoniously*] I would not make trouble between my lord and you.

PIETRO [*between his teeth*] Give me the truth! [*A pause*] Quick! What has he done?

GISMONDA. Put a spy on us!

PIETRO. No! That's not true!

GISMONDA. Madonna Giulia!

PIETRO [*parroting*] Madonna Giulia? [*As he understands; in a burst of rage*] She then!

GISMONDA. Wait! He came to her, and said: "Go, sit on the terrace, mark the lovers well, how they stare with their souls quick, how they lean to each other — "

PIETRO. Oh, this is not like my lord!

GISMONDA. It is very like a jealous man.

PIETRO [*scornfully, with rage*] Play the hypocrite! Set a spy!

GISMONDA. But faithful to me. There is more:— "See all! Hear all!" he said to her. "You shall have a gold chain of an hundred links, if you find them — as I know them — guilty!"

PIETRO [*slowly*] "As he knows us . . . guilty!" He said tonight: "I trust you as my brother" . . . [*A pause. He bursts into terrible laughter*] "Brother!" . . . "Trust!" . . . "Trust!" . . . He makes a fool of me! A spy! That's his trust — We are quits! I owe him nothing! [*With menacing emphasis*] Now I can hate you . . .

[*He puts his arm over his eyes. Almost in a sob*] Brother!

[*She comes to him, takes away his arm from before his eyes, and looks hard at him*]

GISMONDA [*with deep scorn*] Is that your hate?

PIETRO. With all these years, does he know me so little?

GISMONDA [*coming close to him*] Do you know yourself? [*with passion*] Pietro!

PIETRO [*in bitter sadness*] Are we come to this? — "As he knows us, guilty . . . !"

GISMONDA [*her arms sliding round his neck*] I know myself. I love you! Do you know yourself, Pietro?

PIETRO [*in a hoarse cry*] Aye, now! [*He takes her in his arms, and kisses her*] Only you count with me now! Only you!

GISMONDA. That is as I would be loved.

PIETRO. This night is mine, as you are! Afterwards . . . [*A pause. He shakes off the thought; with increased passion*] My men — I can send them on alone! Let me come back to you!

GISMONDA [*breaking away from him*] Are you mad?

PIETRO. With love! Give me rendez-vous!

GISMONDA. There is an old song where a lover asks for rendez-vous. It has an ironical ending.

PIETRO. We are past trifling! Give me an answer!

GISMONDA. Would you ruin me?

PIETRO. No one shall know. I shall take road

for Germany, send on my men, return, and wait in the garden below. Some signal there must be . . . When he sets out for Brescia —

GISMONDA [*in an eager whisper*] Signor!

PIETRO. Aye, when he goes, put out the torches. I can climb up the wall . . . there are ledges and copings for foothold . . .

GISMONDA [*shrilly*] What! Shall I take such risks!

PIETRO [*with menace*] You said you love me! You spoke truth?

GISMONDA [*afraid*] I love you.

PIETRO. Then tonight you will yourself put out these torches, and wait here alone, and give me rendez-vous. You are my life. I will not be denied!

*Enter Madonna Giulia*

MADONNA GIULIA. Lady! He is coming!

PIETRO. Give me an answer!

GISMONDA. My answer or a token of my answer you shall have . . . [*She pauses*]

PIETRO. Gismonda!

GISMONDA [*moving away; provokingly*] Before you go!

[*She goes to the back of the stage, picks up a lute, and begins to play.*[1] *Alessandro enters in traveling costume, and stands watching*

[1] For the music of this song specially composed for this play by Randall Thompson see pages 28-31.

*her. She sings with a certain defiant passion, and looks at neither man.*]

GISMONDA [*singing*]

You leave me, love?
These hands — pale cups for your desire —
Would hold you here.

What would you, sweet?
Ah, strange and bitter is your wish
For rendez-vous!

Love is enough . . .
Plead not! More is not mine to give!
[*A pause; then in a cry*]
Love, are you gone?

[*A silence. Suddenly Alessandro claps his hands, murmuring "Brava! Brava!" Gismonda throws down the lute, and there is general movement and speech.*]

PIETRO [*formally*] I am detaining my lord. I will change my dress.

ALESSANDRO. I would have a few words with you, Pietro.

PIETRO. Before I go, my lord. [*He bows to them both, and goes out.*]

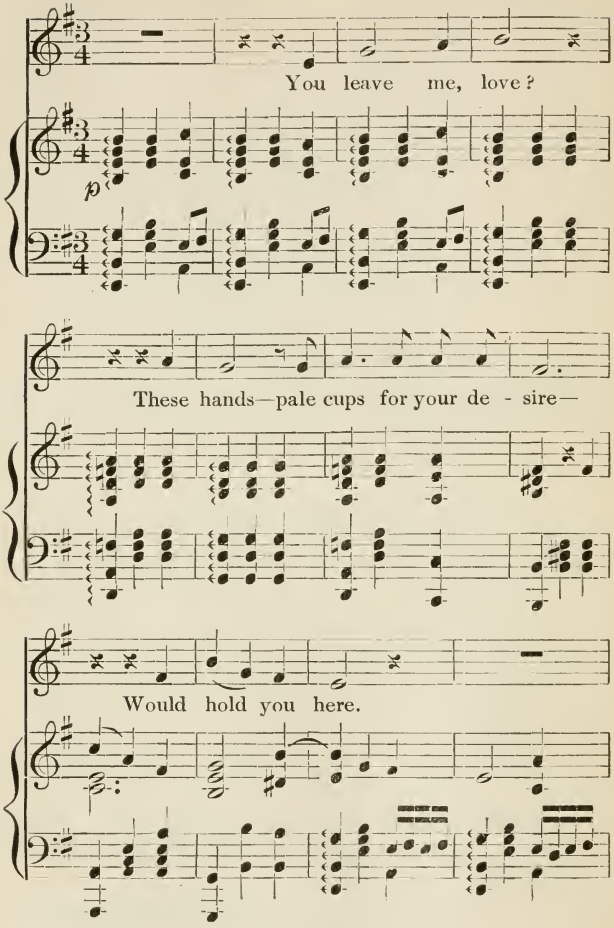
ALESSANDRO [*in dismissal*] Madonna!

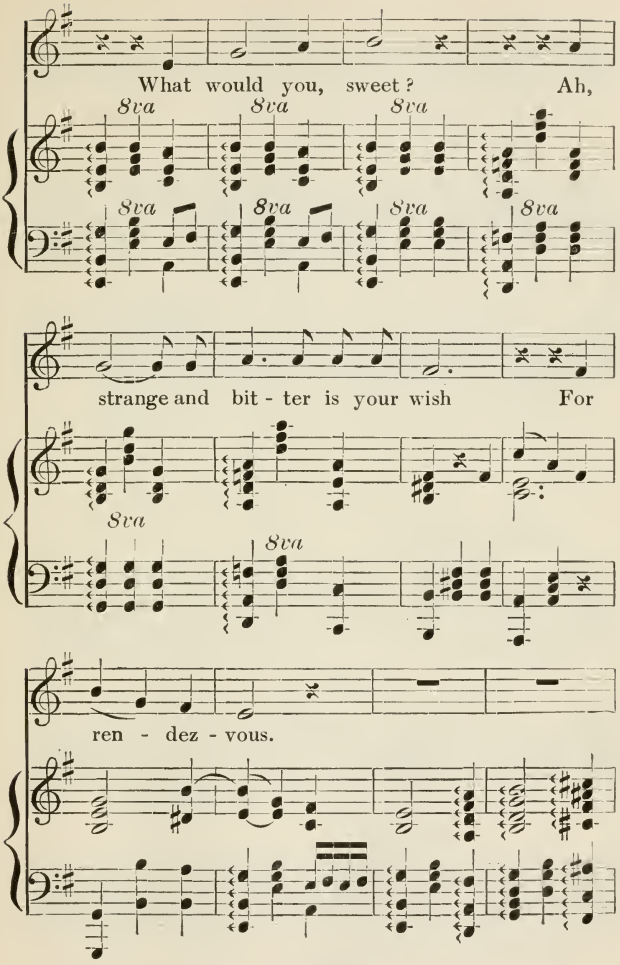
MADONNA GIULIA [*with profound curtsies*] My gracious lord! — Lady!

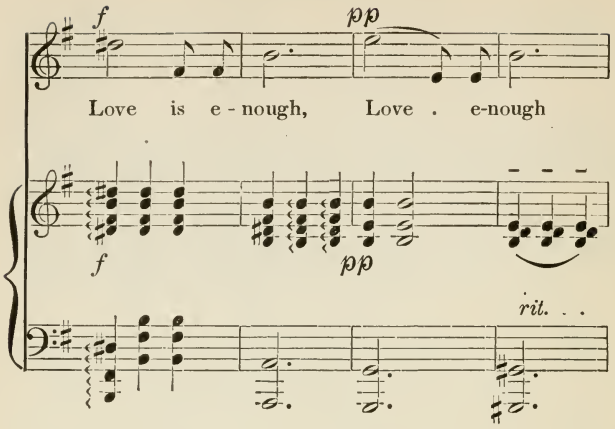
*Exit Madonna Giulia*

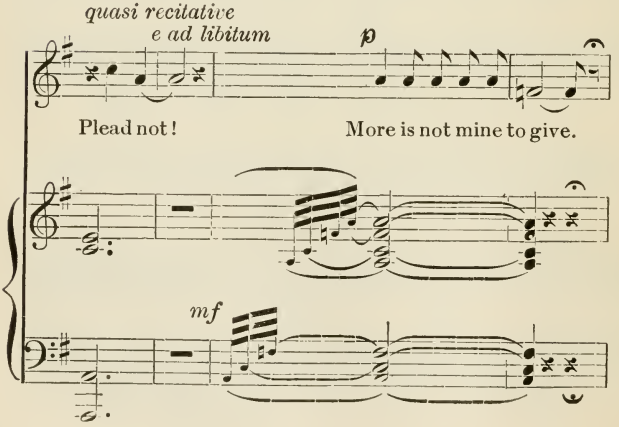
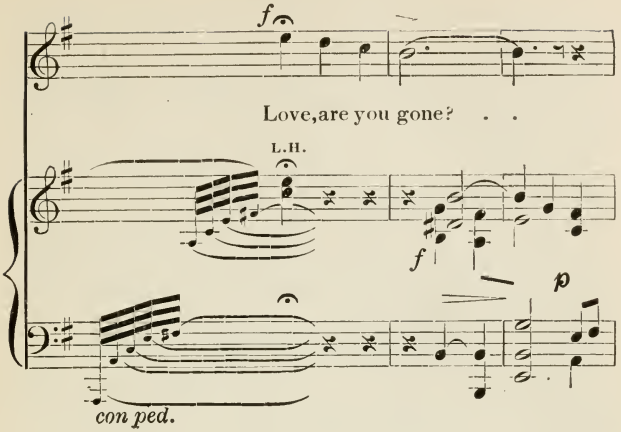
# GISMONDA'S SONG

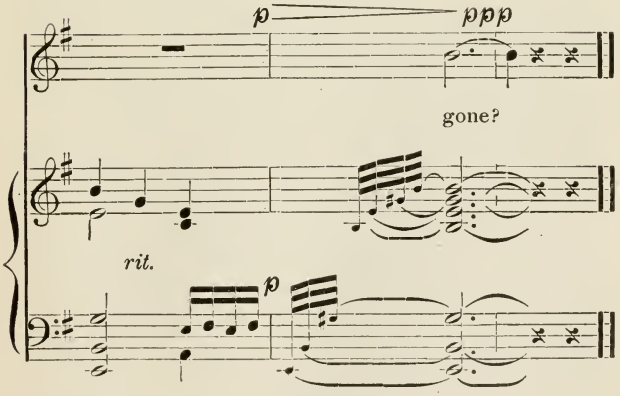
KENNETH RAISBECK RANDALL THOMPSON




What would you, sweet? Ah,
8va
strange and bit - ter is your wish For
ren - dez - vous.


f
pp
Love is e - nough, Love . e-nough
f
pp
rit. . .


quasi recitative
e ad libitum
p
Plead not!
More is not mine to give.
mf

f
Love, are you gone? . .
L.H.
f
p
con ped.


p
ppp
gone?
rit.
p

GISMONDA [*to make conversation*] So you like my song?

ALESSANDRO [*taking the cue*] It is charming. But it has set me to wondering if to every woman there is love.

GISMONDA. I must catch you up, my lord! "There speaks Rome!"

ALESSANDRO. With a difference. Love might come to you unknown. Then I should only pity you, as God knows I pity all men and women who love despite themselves.

GISMONDA [*lightly*] But if I took a lover?

ALESSANDRO [*after a moment; with grave emphasis*] My house is a great house. My name is an old name, and there is no stain on it. I could not live dishonored. You must feel that too. You are my wife. You have custody of my fair fame. There can be no trifling with that, you understand.

GISMONDA [*sanctimoniously*] It would be sinful to love any but you, my lord.

ALESSANDRO [*after a pause*] Gismonda, give me an honest answer! Do you love me?

GISMONDA [*with abandon*] As my life, sweet lord!

ALESSANDRO [*unmoved; quietly*] Lies anger me. You need not fear to speak the truth.

GISMONDA [*exaggerating; with an undertone of insolent irony*] As you love your honor, do I love you!

ALESSANDRO [*in a burst of rage*] Am I a dotard to be gulled?

GISMONDA [*frightened*] My lord!

ALESSANDRO. Or do you fear I shall let drive my dagger through your breast when you speak truth and say: "My lord, I do not love you!"

GISMONDA [*forcing a tear*] To speak thus . . . just as we part . . . unkind . . . !

ALESSANDRO [*relaxing; ironically*] What! Shall you pine for me?

GISMONDA. I shall be cold as ice and dull as ditch water in your absence.

ALESSANDRO. Cold I would have you, but not dull. This afternoon there came a train of pack mules to the castle.

GISMONDA [*sitting; indifferently*] You told me. Laden with provender, I believe?

ALESSANDRO. To stave off boredom. Trifles for your amusement.

GISMONDA [*leaning back; indolently*] Greek sermons, doubtless?

ALESSANDRO. Thirteen carved chests painted in ultramarine and gold leaf — a chest for each day I am gone.

GISMONDA. A pretty sentiment. But you shall pay forfeit if you extend your absence by so much as — half a chest. [*Just not yawning*] Pray, what do these chests contain?

ALESSANDRO. Stuffs for your adornment.

GISMONDA [*showing interest*] Ah!

ALESSANDRO. Velvets from the Orient. Furs from India. Perfumes and embroideries from Arabia.

GISMONDA. Oh, my dear lord!

ALESSANDRO. You shall make choice from trays of gems.

GISMONDA. Gems! You have got me gems!

ALESSANDRO. Anachimo of Ferrara has tooled you an Orpheus on a turquoise. From Florence there comes a carnelian engraved with an Omphale, walking nude. These are all that I remember.

GISMONDA. Most magnificent and sweet lord! — You have the list?

ALESSANDRO [*showing it*] It is here.

GISMONDA [*reaching for it*] Quick!

ALESSANDRO [*putting it in his breast*] First I must talk with you.

GISMONDA. Later!

ALESSANDRO. Now. About you.

GISMONDA [*relenting*] Well?

ALESSANDRO. And me. [*She gives him a sharp look, but says nothing*] When we married I was forty-seven, you seventeen. Come! Did not seventeen make a barren contract?

GISMONDA. No better marriage was made by any lady of Rome that year.

ALESSANDRO. Aye, set your dowry against my name, my lands, this fair castle adorned with frescoes and surrounded with avenues of plane trees and acacias: the scales tip even. But you brought something beside: youth!

GISMONDA. When I have so kind and generous a lord, a fig for those thirty years!

ALESSANDRO. So thought I. A fig for them! Why, here had Pietro been with me since boy-

hood, with never a thought of the weary quarter century between us. It seemed that it should be so with you and me. It seemed there would be three young people in the castle. So there were at first. Oh, what a blind fool was I, thinking we should always . . . Was I not absurd, Gismonda?

GISMONDA [*a little patronizingly*] There is hardly a difference between you and us.

ALESSANDRO [*ironically*] That's kind of you. — But I saw a difference. There were glances between you and Pietro which I did not understand.

GISMONDA [*disturbed*] You have imagined this, my lord!

ALESSANDRO. You fell silent when I came into the room —

GISMONDA [*fearful*] No!

ALESSANDRO. You laughed at things I did not find amusing. Then Pietro no longer gave me his confidence. He talked to me in the conventional, trite fashion that young people use with those they consider old. Old! Then I knew!

GISMONDA [*breathing relief*] Ah!

ALESSANDRO. Old! How droll it is: at forty-seven! The very flush of life, one would suppose. I know better. So will you some day, Gismonda, when those eyes that are like the eyes of the peregrine falcon are pouched and dull. Live with seventeen and twenty-two and love them: You are old!

GISMONDA [*superficially*] No, no, my lord! I am sure . . . [*Her voice trails off. A pause*]

If that is all, my dear lord, give me the list. Please! This is such bitter preachment.

ALESSANDRO. Bitter truth. Do not think me peevishly complaining that I have not youth's privileges. I have others . . . [*With the ghost of a smile*] those of my forty-seven years. I am content with them. [*With real tenderness*] It is not I but you, my sweet Gismonda, who will suffer more in these next years. Our contract was not fair. But it holds. It will hold till I die. You are bound to me. You do not love me, but you are my wife. Is not that a hard bargain?

GISMONDA [*petulantly*] I know of no bargain.

ALESSANDRO [*with deep feeling*] It is this, Gismonda:— Be most discreet. Guard your fair fame as jealously as I do. If you should love, that day take your soul into your own hands. Know yourself. Love if you will, but make no sign!

GISMONDA. This is idle talk.

ALESSANDRO [*in a burst of rage*] How, then! Are not you in love?

GISMONDA [*shrilly*] Who says that?

ALESSANDRO [*angrily*] Who says it? Do you think I deal in spies and informers to tell on my wife? I question, not accuse.

GISMONDA [*panting*] Ah! [*A pause*] In love? With you.

ALESSANDRO [*bitterly*] I did wrong to ask. It is in the bargain that I will not ask.

GISMONDA [*coaxingly*] Come, my gracious lord! Enough! You have been wordier than usual, with less meaning. You are moody tonight — the heat

has tired you, and made you restless. [*She takes his hand, leaning against him, with her head on his breast*] Here is your Gismonda to comfort and quiet you . . . so . . . [*She kisses his hand*] And with love words: sweet lord! [*Just so soon as she thinks safe, in the same flute notes*] Now give me the list!

[*He stares unseeing. He takes the list from his breast, and smiling bitterly, gives it to her.*]

ALESSANDRO. And my bargain, Gismonda?

GISMONDA [*still holding his hand in one of hers; reading from the list*] "From Venice emeralds and rubies, heliotrope, jasper, and sard" — Oh, magnificence! . . . What did you say, my good lord?

ALESSANDRO. My bargain?

GISMONDA. Bargain? "Bales of tabi, watered silks of wine color and henna and egg blue from Damascus" — Damascus! Think of that! . . . What bargain, my lord?

ALESSANDRO [*taking her by the wrists*] Do you not remember?

GISMONDA. But you were jesting!

ALESSANDRO. I was not jesting. For God's sake, do not laugh, Gismonda! I am trusting you. I am giving you my whole trust. It is our lives you are deciding.

GISMONDA. I will be serious, if you wish. Yes, if it is a bargain, I will be as serious as a Jew at business. And I will tell you that it is no bargain unless you throw in that ruby I have coveted

so long, the balass ruby — Aië! Aië! You are hurting my wrists! [*He flings down her wrists with restrained violence, and turns sharply away. She says, nursing her wrists*] The bargain?

ALESSANDRO [*in a hard voice*] Done!

GISMONDA [*seizing his ring hand*] The ruby! Quick!

ALESSANDRO [*closing his fist so that she cannot get at the ring*] You must wait!

GISMONDA [*pulling at his finger*] Not a minute.

ALESSANDRO. Half an hour! [*Pushing away her hands; grimly*] Till I see how you keep your bargain.

GISMONDA [*in high feather*] Well! So be it! You shall see! [*Reading from the list*] "Gold brocade patterned over with leopards and doves and eagles" — My lord! Let me have up a few of these stuffs now! To console me for your departure! To keep me from . . . [*A pause, as she remembers the rendez-vous.*]

ALESSANDRO. From going stupidly to bed?

GISMONDA [*laughing as she goes out*] Aye! From going stupidly to bed!

[*In the doorway she passes Pietro who has changed into traveling dress, with dagger and trailing gold spurs. She drops him an ironic curtsey, murmuring "Signor!" Something in her tone makes him look hard after her, without bowing. After a moment he turns to Alessandro.*]

PIETRO. You have some last instructions?

ALESSANDRO. No. I wanted a few words with you — alone.

PIETRO [*restive*] It is late.

ALESSANDRO. Do not fear. [*A pause. He indicates a chair for Pietro, and both men sit down*] A month ago you asked permission to leave my service. You wished me not to question you. I have trusted you absolutely. I gave you permission, and asked you no questions.

PIETRO. Have you not discovered why I go to Germany?

ALESSANDRO. You have told me nothing.

PIETRO. There are more subtle ways of gaining information.

ALESSANDRO. There is only one way of trusting. When for the first time in your life you withheld your confidence from me — because it was the first time, because I trusted you — I felt I must let you decide whether or no silence were wise. Still my instinct told me that we should be honest in this as in all things before. [*A pause*] Can you not trust me, Pietro?

PIETRO. Just so much as you have trusted me, do I trust you, my lord.

ALESSANDRO [*with relief*] I needed that assurance.

PIETRO. I could not change unless you did, my lord. [*A pause*] Perhaps those words — astonish you?

ALESSANDRO. Not the words. I have been longing for them. But your tone — You are not speaking lightly, Pietro?

PIETRO. I spoke truth. I said I could not change unless you did.

ALESSANDRO. Then there is no bitterness in your going. You have been closer to me than any other man. You are still. So long as you leave me understanding that, this separation can do our friendship no hurt. Even if you should not return, we should have the memory of these ten years untouched by distrust — Why do you smile?

PIETRO [*with a shrug*] From a light heart. [*A pause. Alessandro bursts out*]

ALESSANDRO. Pietro, have you heard me?

PIETRO [*unmoved*] Everything.

ALESSANDRO. Then our future rests with you. I have done all I can. You make me feel that I have wasted words — that you are untouched by all that I am thinking and feeling. [*Deeply moved, he rises and goes upstage. After a pause, to make conversation*] I shall take no pleasure in my horses this year. [*Pietro smiles sardonically. A pause.*] If you establish yourself abroad I shall be glad to send you some of my Barbary stock. You love fine horses so. [*A pause. He pours out a cup of wine.*] We shall not soon drink wine together again.

[*Pietro accepts the cup, carries it toward his lips, hesitates, and with decision puts it down*]

PIETRO [*staccato*] I am not thirsty.

ALESSANDRO. It is the stirrup cup. [*A pause*] The cup of friendship.

PIETRO. I will not drink with you.

ALESSANDRO. Pietro! [*He comes round the table*] What has come over you?

PIETRO. Go through with your pretense, I cannot. I am sick of lies.

ALESSANDRO. What lies?

PIETRO. All that tonight you have pretended — this hypocrisy! — Oh, if ever we were friends let us hate nobly!

ALESSANDRO. Come! Speak out, or we shall get nowhere! How have I played you double? [*A pause*] Can you not answer me?

PIETRO. Why should I tell you what you know?

ALESSANDRO. There can be no quarrel between us, save through misunderstanding. We shall run in circles unless you answer my questions. Let us settle this like reasonable men.

PIETRO. I will not talk with you!

ALESSANDRO [*after a pause*] What do you want? Would you pick a quarrel with me, like a common bully? Is that your mood?

PIETRO. My mood is for traveling. The moon is up. I have a journey to go.

ALESSANDRO. And I. This comes first. [*A pause*] You are not open with me. That is unlike you. You are shielding someone —

PIETRO [*sharply*] No!

ALESSANDRO [*driving him hard*] Then if the grievance rests with us alone you will speak out.

PIETRO [*with increased tension*] I say no!

ALESSANDRO. I have played you false, eh? You will tell me in what way, unless you are somehow bound . . . to someone —

PIETRO [*violently*] No one!

ALESSANDRO. Ten months since I sent you to Rome to bring me Gismonda —

PIETRO [*sucking in his breath*] Ah!

ALESSANDRO [*with triumph*] Why do you put hand to dagger?

PIETRO. Go on!

ALESSANDRO. When first you rode into the town by her litter, even then my heart said — [*He pauses*]

PIETRO. Go on! [*He waits. Tortured*] Go on!

ALESSANDRO. It were better if she came as the bride of Pietro!

PIETRO [*moving toward him with his dagger out*] Would you trick me?

ALESSANDRO. You fool, am I or your conscience teasing you now? How shall you keep your secret? By killing me and all those after me who find you out? [*A pause. Pietro flings down his dagger. After a moment Alessandro moves to him. Compassionately*] These two months I have seen you torturing yourself.

PIETRO. Give me no pity!

ALESSANDRO. She has played on you cruelly. Her beauty — her charm — I know how, with a man like you, she can enslave you body and spirit. If you were a libertine I should let you alone. It is because she has involved in you both desire and a real love that I talk with you.

PIETRO. Do not speak of her!

ALESSANDRO. I speak of her, my wife, only because I must save you from the bitter disillu-

sion I have known. For this woman to come between us two — Futile! [*More quietly*] Impossible! It is you and I who count — what we have brought through these ten years — [*Pietro makes an impatient gesture. With force*] We must not quarrel! We are not man and woman to kiss each other into love again! Between men are only words. In God's name, let us choose those words with care!

PIETRO. I am sick of words!

ALESSANDRO [*angered*] Would you like deeds? You and I have enemies. Shall I save them the trouble of putting you to the rack? Are you in their pay to slit my throat?

PIETRO. Oh, could you think that of me!

ALESSANDRO. If you were a woman who proved false, no matter! Woman is weak. She can do us no hurt. But we are men together, and these are troubled times. Man must keep faith with man, or his possessions, his life, his reputation, his honor — all are in danger!

PIETRO. We have no quarrel, if you will let me go!

ALESSANDRO. You could go thus from me, Pietro? [*A pause*] For ten years you have lived here in the castle. For ten years this has been your home. Can you talk so on your last night here? Do not memories haunt and shame you?

PIETRO [*harshly*] I have no memories.

ALESSANDRO [*with purpose*] When I look back on our ten years together — so many dawns that

we have ridden to the hunt — so many weary vigils when we were in danger —

PIETRO. Men's hearts change to one another.

ALESSANDRO [*with purpose*] When you were younger — do you remember how you slipped off into the forest, and were gone two days and returned half dead with weariness, dragging after you a buck for my birthday? What kept you sleepless in the forest those two days and nights, Pietro?

PIETRO. You would move me with memories. I will not be moved! I will not!

ALESSANDRO. You cannot know what tenderness it used to move in me to see you aping my way of laughing, my way of being angry. Then when Malfi came down from the mountains to plunder and destroy — you remember those times, Pietro?

PIETRO [*with a sudden glow*] I remember.

ALESSANDRO. In those dread days and nights, to have you no longer a boy but a man whom I could lean on, whom I could trust — I took new life! Then to know that other men thought well of you . . . yes, that last . . . that meant much to me!

PIETRO [*breaking*] My lord, when you speak thus —

ALESSANDRO. Yes, Pietro?

PIETRO. If you had kept that trust in me —

ALESSANDRO [*slowly*] If I had kept that trust in you . . . [*A pause. He regards Pietro, slowly nods his head, and asks*] How came that little

scar on your right cheek, Pietro? [*Pietro does not answer*] The boar that turned ugly and ran at me — he nicked you there. What made you risk your life for me, Pietro? [*Pietro does not answer*] When it comes winter I shall limp a little. Why?

PIETRO. When we were besieged . . . the catapult . . . [*He covers his eyes with his hands.*] My lord!

ALESSANDRO. Need we talk of trust?

PIETRO [*after a pause*] You did not put a spy on me?

ALESSANDRO. Do you think I hold your loyalty so cheap?

PIETRO. I know you do not. [*A pause.*] For ten years your house has been my home. For ten years your strength has been ready at my need. For ten years you have guided and moulded me. All my beliefs are borrowed from you. To keep your faith has been the law of my lfe. I would have said that no thing but the greatest could come between us two and yet this lie —

ALESSANDRO. It is dead.

PIETRO [*in bitter sadness*] The lie is dead. But the wish to believe it — the wish to justify my hate of you — the wish to play the traitor —

ALESSANDRO. You are no traitor!

PIETRO. You do not know me!

ALESSANDRO. You and I understand each other as no woman will ever understand us. What does she know of man's real life? She scarce touches it.

PIETRO. Does it matter whether she touches our lives little or much, when she so changes them?

ALESSANDRO. Nothing is changed!

PIETRO. I am turned traitor!

ALESSANDRO. The Pietro who goes to Germany tonight lest he sin against his friend is no traitor!

PIETRO. I tell you I am changed!

ALESSANDRO. You who have stabbed men for speaking ill of me? You who have starved through my lean days with me, schemed to better my fortunes, fought at my side, got wounds in my stead, and would have died for me?

PIETRO. No more! [*He drops sobbing into a chair.*]

ALESSANDRO. It is that Pietro I shall remember. [*A pause*] You must go from me with your soul assured on one point: You conquered yourself when you resolved to go away from her. — You cannot know what that meant to me!

PIETRO. I am not the man you think me!

ALESSANDRO. No one but you could ever shake my faith in you, and not even you when you prove by deeds what now you would destroy with words.

PIETRO. Enough!

ALESSANDRO. In a man's heart the deepest hunger is for faithfulness. [*With exultation*] You have kept faith with me!

PIETRO [*rising*] Make an end! Make an end! Make an end!

[*Gismonda enters. She is wearing an exceptionally brilliant and rich cloak; her raised arms are girdled with necklaces, and she is dangling*

*the stones against her lips and cheeks; she is laughing. Pietro starts toward her.*]

PIETRO. Lady!

GISMONDA [*curtseying to the floor*] Signor!

PIETRO. I am going.

GISMONDA. Going? [*Eagerly and softly*] Signor! — Signor! [*There is a pause. The light in her face fades; she puts up her hand before her eyes, as if to strike away a mist.*]

PIETRO. Yes, lady.

GISMONDA [*with a cold little laugh*] Farewell!

PIETRO [*in a low voice*] My answer — ?

GISMONDA. Farewell! [*He bows to her and goes out. She stands impassive, her eyes fixed, her fingers plucking idly at the silks and jewels.*]

ALESSANDRO [*in a half-stifled cry*] Pietro!

[*Gismonda just glances at him. On the moment she breaks into a high hard laugh that slides through an octave and dies suddenly in her throat. He is roused from his daze; he fixes her with a look of terrible hate. He comes to her, puts his hands to her necklaces, examines them a moment, and looks again at her. His silence, his look, his lack of deference to her person fill her with fear; she stands rigid, with dilated eyes. His hands crawl up the necklace until they are come to her throat; at his touch her head drops back; he draws away his hands sharply, and moves up on the balcony. Madonna Giulia enters, her arms laden with velvets, silks, and a great feather fan; these she lays on bench at right.*]

MADONNA GIULIA [*bustling down to Gismonda*] Could there be a sweeter confection in dress stuffs than this blue velvet — just the color our Holy Madonna wears in the chapel altar-piece! I swear that when you wear it, lady —

GISMONDA [*laying her hand on the other's arm; in a very gentle voice*] Please do not talk to me!

MADONNA GIULIA. You will look just like the Holy —

GISMONDA. [*terrifyingly*] Quiet, you fool!

[*A burst of trumpets. A rose color glow plays up from the courtyard and illumines the balcony on which Alessandro stands. Madonna Giulia runs to the parapet at the back.*]

MADONNA GIULIA. They have set off the fireworks. It is clear as day!

GISMONDA [*imperiously*] Madonna!

MADONNA GIULIA [*not heeding*] What a crowd! Yes, there he is! *Viva* Signor!

GISMONDA [*her tension increasing*] Madonna! !

MADONNA GIULIA. *Viva* Signor Pietro!

GISMONDA. Madonna! ! !

MADONNA GIULIA [*slowly coming away*] Yes, lady?

GISMONDA [*in a low voice*] You saw him plainly?

MADONNA GIULIA. Even to the little scar on his right cheek.

GISMONDA. How did he look?

MADONNA GIULIA [*as she catches sight of Alessandro; awed*] You see my lord?

GISMONDA [*after a glance*] But Signor Pietro!

MADONNA GIULIA Both of them! — They look like dying men!

[*Trumpets sound. Gismonda hesitates a moment, then goes to the parapet, and looks over it down into the courtyard. Suddenly she whirls, as if struck through from behind, stands transfixed, and stares unseeing. Nervously and with extreme caution she peers round at Alessandro who stands proudly rigid on the balcony. Then she comes hurriedly down to Madonna Giulia.*]

GISMONDA. This fan! To Signor Pietro! Quick!

[*Madonna Giulia takes the silver fan and goes out. Trumpets sound. Gismonda has half crossed the terrace when Alessandro speaks.*]

ALESSANDRO. Come stand with me on the balcony where he can see you as he rides away —

GISMONDA. What! Leave my silks for him? As if I came by such splendor every day! Come, my lord! Let me show you my treasure!

ALESSANDRO. I will stay here.

GISMONDA. Am I fairer in this silk — or this? — my lord?

ALESSANDRO. Perhaps he will look up —

GISMONDA [*going back to him*] See how I have adorned myself that you may take pleasure in me! Mark this cloak! Mark these jewels — and these — and these — !

ALESSANDRO [*harshly*] Do not trouble me, Gismonda!

GISMONDA [*her arms round him*] Lord Alessandro, as you love me —

ALESSANDRO. There goes a page — Yes, he is running after Pietro — ! [*As her arms tighten round him, flinging her off*] Let be, Gismonda!

GISMONDA. Look not at *him* but at *me! Look* at me!

ALESSANDRO. He gives Pietro —

GISMONDA [*pulling at him; frenzied*] Come away!

ALESSANDRO. Something — something that catches the light — [*A pause. His figure stiffens. She peers round at his face, and tiptoes down the steps. He whirls on her*] Your fan?

GISMONDA [*paralyzed*] My lord!

ALESSANDRO. Where is your fan?

GISMONDA [*snatching up the feather fan, and waving it above her head*] My sweet lord, here!

ALESSANDRO. Your silver fan!

GISMONDA [*stupidly*] Silver fan?

ALESSANDRO. Can you not hear? Can you not understand? Your fan! Your silver fan!

GISMONDA. I have put it away! It is in my chamber! [*She starts rapidly toward the door. He intercepts her.*]

ALESSANDRO. You lie! It is not in your chamber! It is in his hands! [*Almost in a sob*] He rides to Germany with your fan against his heart!

[*After a moment his face hardens with purpose; he crosses to the door, and shuts and locks it. She slowly retreats. He turns, and on the instant she is still. He stands with his back to the door,*

*regarding her fixedly; his hand plays nervously with his dagger, drawing it now in, now half out of its sheath. He advances a step and again halts. There is a pause. Suddenly she bursts out*]

GISMONDA. My lord!

ALESSANDRO. Yes?

GISMONDA. That dagger!

ALESSANDRO [*resolved*] Yes!

GISMONDA [*in a great cry*] No! I am not afraid. [*There is another pause. He advances another pace. Again she bursts out*] My lord, let me tell you everything!

ALESSANDRO [*implacably*] Nothing!

GISMONDA. He seduced me! . . . He gained a power over me!

ALESSANDRO: Lies!

GISMONDA. You said tonight you would pity me if I were to love!

ALESSANDRO. Love? You!

GISMONDA. Never before! But with him — There I loved! [*She flings herself on her knees and embraces his legs.*] For Jesus' sake, have pity! As you have ever loved, have pity! [*She breaks into violent sobbing, and bends her head on her arms. He stoops over her with a kind of wonder, takes her by the shoulders, and bends her back, so that he can see her face. She endeavors to keep it hidden, but when she cannot she raises it and stares at him with hard, defiant eyes*]

ALESSANDRO [*bursts out laughing*] Your eyes are dry as jewels! Your heart! — [*savagely*]

It is useless! You made a bargain! You broke it! You are guilty!

[*Despairing and broken she drags herself up from her knees. After a moment she pulls herself together and turns on him with scorn.*]

GISMONDA. In Rome it is well done to cheat a tradesman! Was your father a pedlar Jew that you cannot even play the honest bargainer? That ruby —

ALESSANDRO. The ruby is yours!

GISMONDA [*with sarcasm*] To dream of?

ALESSANDRO. To have — [*A glass of half drunk wine stands on the table. He drops the ring in the cup and holds it out to her*] in a cup!

GISMONDA [*slowly*] That ring is poisoned!

ALESSANDRO. Yes.

GISMONDA. To drink is death! — [*She looks down at the cup, then puts out her hand in a little gesture of supplication; in a faint voice*] My lord!

ALESSANDRO [*with scorn*] So this is how a Roman dies!

[*She looks at him proudly, takes the cup, and drinks. She shudders slightly, smiles, and takes the ring from the cup, slips it on her finger, and holds up her hand to admire it.*]

GISMONDA. Rome would envy me this ruby! Bury it with me; I would have it burn among my dust — [*A short pause; in a low voice; smiling*]

When I am dust! [*She sways. The wine glass falls from her hand and breaks*] Pardon, Signor connoisseur! It was a thing you loved — Murano glass, beautiful, like me, and easily broken. We shall put lip to lip again, that cup and I, in — [*she laughs*] Dante's Hell? [*She sits in the chair by the table.*] To die of my first affair! That's droll enough! In Rome they will say you might as well have killed me for wearing my hat in the fashion! In Rome we are less finicking! I was a Roman. . . . [*With a kind of pleased surprise*] That's my epitaph! [*Silence; then fretfully*] I am cold! [*Alessandro silently brings the silks and velvets, and lays them about her shoulders, and over her knees and feet*] That foolish song keeps running in my head — [*Singing feebly*]

"*Love is enough!*
*Plead not! More is not mine to give* — "

That makes me think of one who was ready to die of love for me —

ALESSANDRO [*harshly*] Be still! [*A pause*] Black nights and days I see ahead of me, but one memory to stave off madness: You could not make a traitor of Pietro! [*Tauntingly*] Was that your first defeat — Roman?

GISMONDA [*with effort*] You say defeat? . . . Fool! no defeat . . . if . . . signal . . .

ALESSANDRO [*puzzled*] Signal? [*A pause*]

GISMONDA [*in a clear voice*] Put out the torches!

ALESSANDRO. A signal? [*A pause. He comes*

*close to her*] You, Gismonda, answer me! That is a signal?

GISMONDA. Only . . . my vanity . . . more beautiful . . . in the . . . moon . . .

ALESSANDRO [*with relief*] Ah! [*He wets a cloth with wine, and extinguishes three of the four torches.*]

GISMONDA. So that you . . . eyes open . . . Pietro. . . .

ALESSANDRO [*startled*] Pietro!

GISMONDA [*with a faint laugh*] You and he . . . my last jest . . .

ALESSANDRO [*fiercely*] What of Pietro?

GISMONDA. You give . . . him . . . [*with effort; in a whisper*] rendez-vous.

[*She dies.*]

ALESSANDRO. Rendez-vous! To give Pietro rendez-vous! [*In a cry of utter despair*] Oh, God! Is there no end?

[*He goes to the fourth torch, and brings his dagger close to the light where he examines the blade. His face shows set, drawn, savage. He puts out this torch. He crosses the terrace, and stands in the shadow of a pillar, his dagger ready. The moonlight brilliantly floods the terrace, spills over the still figure of the dead woman, and picks out points of flashing iridescence where the gems gleam in her hair, on her arms and hands. For a moment there is silence. Then a faint scraping sound. Next the word* "Gismonda!" *very soft, in the voice of Pietro. A second later, and Pietro climbs up over the parapet of the little balcony.*

*He comes down the steps, hesitates, and then as he sees Gismonda in the chair by the table, he laughs quietly, and comes forward, crying softly, but with passionate tenderness*]

PIETRO. Gismonda!

*As he moves down Alessandro comes from behind the pillar and follows him, his dagger raised as*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

# COOKS AND CARDINALS

COMEDY IN ONE ACT

BY

NORMAN C. LINDAU

## CHARACTERS

| | |
|---|---|
| The Girl (Kathleen) | Father Anselm |
| The Youth (Teddy) | Levraut |
| Mrs. Connelly | The Cardinal |

Originally produced November 24, 1919 by The 47 Workshop. Copyright, 1919, by Norman C. Lindau.

Permission for amateur or professional performances of any kind must first be obtained from The 47 Workshop, Harvard College, Cambridge, Mass. Moving Picture rights reserved.

# COOKS AND CARDINALS

*A well appointed and beautifully kept kitchen; in the left wall, down-stage, a door; another door in the down-stage face of a protuberance which fills the upper left corner of the stage; in the rear wall two windows; between the doors a gas-stove, between the windows a table; in the upper right corner a large dresser, making a brave display of shining pots and pans; down-stage from the dresser, against the right wall, the sink; still farther down-stage, well out from the wall, a larger table; the implements of cookery are to be found in their appropriate places. The windows are of frosted glass, with dotted Swiss half-curtains, and the one to the right is practicable. On the table between the windows are two geraniums in pots, blooming brightly; there is also a sedately bound book, with a spectacle-case marking the reader's place. A kitchen chair stands at either end of the table, its back primly escaping the rear wall by a couple of inches; in front of the table to the left, is a commodious rocking-chair, first cousin to the straight chairs, but unlike them in having arms; it is so placed that one sitting in it faces the larger table. Despite frosted glass and curtains, a fine lot of sunlight is pouring in at the windows.*

*At the table right an eighteen-year-old girl, large of shoe and red of forearm, but none the less bewitchingly pretty in her pink gingham dress and big checked apron, is kneading dough in a yellow bowl, softly whistling "Silver Threads Amongst the Gold." The window right opens, framing the head and trunk of a red-haired, twinkling-eyed youth of twenty-one. The Girl gives a gasp of astonishment.*

THE GIRL. Teddy!

THE YOUTH [*grinning with enjoyment of her surprise*] You bet! [*He climbs in with easy agility, folds his arms across his chest, and stands near the window, regarding her with demure triumph.*]

THE GIRL [*taking her dough-covered hands out of the bowl, and holding her arms stiffly away from her; turning her back to the table at which she has been working, and facing the Youth, she speaks in a scandalized whisper*] In the Cardinal's kitchen!

TEDDY. That's me! [*He crosses toward her, but she wards him off with her doughy hands*] An' believe *me*, I've got —

THE GIRL [*glancing apprehensively at the door down-stage*] Ssssh! [*With every appearance of apprehension greater than hers, Teddy backs softly and rapidly in a straight line, with the result that he crashes into the rocking-chair*] Sssh! [*She lays a forefinger across her lips, and both of them stand in perfect silence for a couple*

*of seconds, looking at the down-stage door. Then the Girl tiptoes across to Teddy, having first removed her finger from her lips, disclosing a line of white across their red; she does not speak until quite close to him*] S'pose Mrs. Connelly was to catch you here!

TEDDY. What's the matter? Ain't this her afternoon out?

THE GIRL. She didn't go today. We've got big doin's here, you know.

TEDDY. Oh. I read in the paper. An Eyetalian cardinal visitin' Cardinal Wheeler; Manducky, or some such name.

THE GIRL. Cardinal Manducci. — You better go, Teddy! Mrs. Connelly might come in any minute! She's jest gone to lay down for a while.

TEDDY. I know her brand of "layin' down." An uncle of mine used to "lay down" like that, till he "layed down" with delirium tremens, an' had to sign the pledge.

THE GIRL [*stifling a laugh*] Sssh! If she was to hear you!

TEDDY [*with masculine insistence on detail*] Well, ain't it so?

THE GIRL [*nodding*] It makes her jest *awful!*

[*Suddenly, without warning, he puts his arms about her waist, and kisses her; she seems by no means averse to the kiss, but as soon as it is an accomplished fact she breaks away from him, and shakes her finger at him reprovingly.*]

THE GIRL. Teddy! In the Cardinal's kitchen!

TEDDY [*impenitently*] Sure. Why not?

THE GIRL. But, *Teddy!*

TEDDY. You look that sweet, Kathy, I bet th' old Cardinal would kiss you himself, if he could see you.

KATHLEEN [*genuinely pained*] You mustn't talk like that about his Eminence.

TEDDY [*apologetically*] I didn't mean no harm, Kathy. . . . I fergot about your bein' a Cath'lic. 'Scuse me.

KATHLEEN [*wide-eyed*] Don't *you* — don't *you* b'long to the Church?

TEDDY [*ignorant of impending disaster*] Me? No. I was raised a Methodist, but I ain't much of anything now.

KATHLEEN [*with real tragedy in her voice*] But you never told me that you didn't b'long to the Church!

TEDDY [*with the impatience of the ignorant*] What's the diff? Can't you love a Methodist as good as a Cath'lic?

KATHLEEN [*hurt; reproaching him for his manner*] Teddy! [*Then returning to the burning issue*] It ain't that I can't love you jest as good. —But I can't marry you.

TED [*in his turn wide-eyed*] Can't marry me! Kathleen!

KATHLEEN [*he has raised his voice*] Ssssh!

TED [*lowering his voice*] But *why* can't you marry me?

KATHLEEN. Because you don't b'long to the Church. Cath'lics can't marry nobody, only Cath'lics.

TED [*with a sigh of relief*] I'll be a Cath'lic, then. I jest as lief as not, anyway.

KATHLEEN [*shaking her head*] Oh no, Teddy. I couldn't marry nobody who made out he believed somethin' he *didn't* believe, jest so's he could do what he wanted to.

TED. Well, I could *try* to believe like you do, couldn't I?

KATHLEEN. It's no use, Teddy. I wouldn't have it. So don't let's talk about it.

TED [*with passion*] But you can't throw me down like this, Kathy! Don't you know how much I love you! [*Kathleen looks at the floor*] I — I'm jest crazy about you!

KATHLEEN [*brokenly*] I'm sorry, Teddy.

TED. Sorry! Don't talk to *me* about bein' sorry! I know how sorry you must be, throwin' me down without any reason!

KATHLEEN [*without looking up*] Ssssh! Mrs. Connelly.

TED [*lowering his voice*] Damn Mrs. Connelly! — Listen, Kathy. You know why I come here this afternoon?

KATHLEEN [*with tearful coquetry*] To see *me*, I guess.

TED. To tell you that I got that raise I been lookin' for, an' ask you how soon you can marry me. I got the afternoon off a-purpose. An' a fine afternoon it's turnin' out to be!

KATHLEEN. Don't think it ain't as bad for me as it is for you, Teddy, because it *is*. I'd give anything in the world if I could say yes.

TED [*persuasively*] Say it, then, Sweetie. Don't lets you an' me scrap about somethin' we can't neither of us help.

KATHLEEN. I *can't*. It would only be leadin' you on. [*Fiercely*] Oh, I wisht I was *rich!* Then we could get a dispensation.

TED. What's *that?*

KATHLEEN. A paper the Pope gives you, sayin' you can do somethin' it wouldn't be right to do if you didn't have it.

TED. I got five hundred dollars in the bank; would that be enough, do you guess?

KATHLEEN. I don't know. — Even if it would, though, you got to have somebody write to his Holiness, an' tell him that you got a good reason for a dispensation. They're awful hard to get.

TED. Wouldn't Cardinal Wheeler write to him for you?

KATHLEEN. His Eminence? Lord, Teddy, I wouldn't dare to ask him! Even if I ever got to speak to him, which I don't.

TED. Well, you got to ask him, Kathy! It looks like our only chance. An' I bet he won't say no; not if you make him see how important it is. An' another thing, if you tell him —

[*Footsteps are heard outside the door downstage*]

KATHLEEN. Mrs. Connelly!

TED [*as he closely approximates the world's record for getting out of a window*] See you tonight.

KATHLEEN [*following him as far as the window; drearily*] Maybe.

[*Ted is gone, and Kathleen stands gazing out of the window when the door down-stage opens, and there enters a large, middle-aged woman of severe mien and portly build; she is clad in rusty black, with a blue and white check apron of imposing size but doubtful cleanliness. Her voice is mellow, and tends to be thick; her gait and gestures are under perfect control, but an occasional hiccough betrays her state of mild intoxication.*]

MRS. CONNELLY. Might I make so bold as to in — inquire, Miss, the meanin' of open winders in this — kitchen?

KATHLEEN [*with tears in her voice*] I was jest lookin' out.

MRS. CONNELLY. Oh. Lookin' out, was you? Gettin' a breath of air, so to speak, an' at the same time inter — ruptin' the monotony of honest toil, which is God's greatest gift to us mis' — rable sinners.

KATHLEEN. Yes ma'am. [*She turns away from the window.*]

MRS. CONNELLY. For sinners we are, Kathleen; mis'rable sinners. One day we flourish as the flowers of the field, an' the next day, lo, our places know us no more. [*Piously*] Of such is the — kingdom of Heaven. [*She crosses to the rocking-chair, and sits down.*]

KATHLEEN. Should I leave the winder open, Mrs. Connelly?

MRS. CONNELLY. Certainly not. I'll have no men starin' into this kitchen. [*Kathleen attempts to close the window; it sticks a little, and she gives a tug which brings it down with a bang, causing Mrs. Connelly to start violently*] An' don't lose your temper, Kathleen! It's a trick as I can't stand in a young girl.

KATHLEEN. The winder stuck.

MRS. CONNELLY. Oh no, Kathleen. Don't seek to blame your own short — comin's on a pore, in — inanimate objeck like a winder. When we do wrong, let us — let us confess, that we may be forgiven.

[*Making no answer, Kathleen returns to the business of kneading. Mrs. Connelly, having bestowed a withering glance upon Kathleen's back, picks up the book, puts on her spectacles, and reads. There is a gentle tap at the door up-stage, and Mrs. Connelly turns a frowning gaze in that direction.*]

MRS. CONNELLY. Well?

[*A beautiful masculine voice, off-stage*].

FATHER ANSELM. It is I, Mrs. Connelly; Father Anselm.

MRS. CONNELLY [*inimically*] Well?

FATHER ANSELM [*off-stage*] I must speak with you, Mrs. Connelly.

MRS. CONNELLY. "Must!" "Must" is it? In me own kitchen!

FATHER ANSELM [*off-stage*] May I come in?

MRS. CONNELLY. Oh yes, come in if you "must." [*Father Anselm enters; he is thirty, and*

*angelic-looking. He stands just within the doorway.*]

FATHER ANSELM. I know that you dislike having men in your kitchen, Mrs. Connelly. But I am come on a most important mission from his Eminence.

MRS. CONNELLY. Go on.

FATHER ANSELM. Cardinal Manducci, you know, has arrived.

MRS. CONNELLY [*bitingly sarcastic*] An' I suppose his Eminence wants me to come up an' meet him.

FATHER ANSELM [*with unhesitant diplomacy*] His Eminence intends taking Cardinal Manducci through the house tomorrow, and then you will have the opportunity.

MRS. CONNELLY [*grudgingly*] Well, I suppose if them two Cardinals have nothin' better to do than come messin' around the kitchen, they'll have to come in.

FATHER ANSELM. Ah — yes.

MRS. CONNELLY [*with condescending graciousness*] You can — tell his Eminence, Father Anselm, that if he likes to bring the Eyetalian Cardinal in here tomorrow, about four o'clock in the afternoon, I have nothin' to say against it.

FATHER ANSELM. Very well, Mrs. Connelly. [*There is a brief pause, then Mrs. Connelly resumes her reading, signifying thereby that the interview is at an end.*]

FATHER ANSELM [*trying to speak casually*] Ah — Mrs. Connelly; one thing more.

MRS. CONNELLY [*looking up with an air of martyred patience*] Well?

FATHER ANSELM. Cardinal Manducci, you know, is an Italian; he is accustomed to — ah — certain dishes which we in this country have not the art of preparing. Spaghetti, for instance.

MRS. CONNELLY. Very well. I'll — cook him some tomorrow. — Kathleen, go an' see if we've got any spaghetti in the house.

KATHLEEN. Yes ma'am. [*She goes out, down-stage.*]

FATHER ANSELM [*the victim of inspiration*] Mrs. Connelly, you know how fond his Eminence is of your biscuits.

MRS. CONNELLY [*with a sweeping gesture, indicating the bowl on the table down-stage*] There'll be some for dinner.

FATHER ANSELM. Yes. — Now suppose his Eminence had to make a long journey, into foreign countries. Don't you think it likely that he would want to take you along, so that you could make biscuits for him when he got to places where there was no one who knew how to make them?

MRS. CONNELLY. I wouldn't be surprised. Not a-tall. His Eminence is only a man, after all, an' they're all finicky about eatin'.

FATHER ANSELM [*eagerly*] You see how likely it would be?

MRS. CONNELLY [*heroically*] Well, I'm not one to travel much, but I'll go. You can tell his Eminence I'll go.

FATHER ANSELM [*hastily*] I was only stating

a hypothetical case, Mrs. Connelly. His Eminence isn't really going, you know.

Mrs. Connelly In — sulted! [*with a burst of maudlin tears*] Insulted in me own kitchen! By a striplin' of a priest young — enough to be me own son! [*Dashing her book upon the floor.*]

Father Anselm. Really now, Mrs. Connelly; really now, you mustn't. [*Picking up the book, and handing it to her*] There. I — ah — I have the highest respect for you, and I shouldn't dream of wounding your feelings intentionally. Indeed not.

Mrs. Connelly [*very much on her dignity*] Then perhaps you'll ex — explain the meanin' of this most unseemly conduct.

Father Anselm [*suddenly haughty*] You take a liberty, Mrs. Connelly, in mimicking his Eminence. An unwarrantable liberty. I cannot permit it to pass uncensured.

Mrs. Connelly. Ho! Indeed? Indeed, Father Anselm! — I'll ask you to kindly get out of me kitchen! The quicker the better!

Father Anselm [*backing into the doorway*] Not until I have delivered his Eminence's message. Monsignor Manducci is accompanied by his chef, M. Levraut, who will prepare spaghetti and some other dishes for him. [*Mrs. Connelly looks bewildered*] You are to place the resources of the kitchen at M. Levraut's disposal, and show him every courtesy. He does not speak English, but he will doubtless be able to find everything he needs. [*Speaking over his shoulder, with an accent*

*which is the modern equivalent of that of Stratford-atte-Bowe*] Entrez, s'il vous plaît, M. Levraut. [*There enters a short, stout, middle-aged man, ruddy, smooth-shaven, and dapper; he is foppishly dressed, with cutaway coat and spats; in one hand he carries a silk hat, in the other a suitcase*] Vous voyez ici Mme. Connelly, cuisinière a Monsignor Wheeler, qui mettra à votre disposition sa cuisine, et qui vous rendra toute aide possible.

LEVRAUT. Merci, mon Pere. [*Advancing into the room, and bowing to Mrs. Connelly*] Enchanté, Madame. Vous êtes trop obligeante.

MRS. CONNELLY [*weakly*] What's the creature sayin', Father Anselm?

FATHER ANSELM. M. Levraut says that he is delighted to make your acquaintance. — Mme. Connelly ne parle pas Français, monsieur.

LEVRAUT. Vraiment! Mais que-voulez-vous? Regardez-la, donc! Elle a l'air bête comme une âne, n'est-ce pas? Bête à faire peur!

FATHER ANSELM. Ah — Oui; oui. [*Then, in response to the inquiring look on Mrs. Connelly's face*] M. Levraut says that he is sure you and he will get along beautifully, and that he will try to give you as little trouble as possible.

MRS. CONNELLY. Trouble indeed! The grinnin' little ape! Don't think for a minute he'll do any cookin' in *this* kitchen! It's no place for a man, a kitchen ain't, let alone a prancin' little monkey like *him!*

LEVRAUT. Qu'est-ce que c'est qu'elle dit, monsieur mon Père?

Father Anselm. Rien; rien du tout! — Now, Mrs. Connelly, you really must be reasonable. His Eminence will be dreadfully displeased if Cardinal Manducci's chef meets with discourteous treatment at your hands; *dreadfully* displeased!

Mrs. Connelly [*stubbornly*] Well does his Eminence know that I have no manner of use for a man in me kitchen; 'tis an' insult to expect me to — tolerate the like of it!

Levraut. Je n'aime pas la mine de cette femme, mon Père! Elle paraît dangereuse! Nom d'un cochon, elle paraît dangereuse!

Father Anselm. Mais non; pas du tout, je vous assure! — You must put aside your prejudices, Mrs. Connelly. M. Levraut will interfere with you as little as he possibly can, I know. He only wants to cook a few things for Monsignor Manducci, and then he will clear out, and leave you in undisturbed possession. — Veuillez faire vos préparations, M. Levraut, si'l vous plaît, avant que je parte.

Levraut. Comment? Vous partirez, mon Père? Vous me laisserez?

Mrs. Connelly. What's the matter with the little monkey? Is he goin' to cry?

Levraut [*drawing closer to Father Anselm, and speaking earnestly*] Ah, monsieur mon Père, ne m'abandonnez pas à cette femme, je vous en prie! Elle m'a pris une aversion, une grande aversion! Je le sens, moi!

Father Anselm [*reassuringly*] Mais non! Vous avez tort, M. Levraut. Soyez tranquille.

Peut-être que Madame Connelly paraît formidable, mais en vérité elle est une femme le plus aimable du monde.

LEVRAUT [*dubiously, after a glance at Mrs. Connelly*] Vraiment?

FATHER ANSELM. Bien sûr!

LEVRAUT [*heroically*] Très bien! Allons donc! [*He marches straight to the table near which Mrs. Connelly is sitting, and places his suitcase upon it; his glossy hat he places upon the chair to the left of the table; Mrs. Connelly twists her head around to watch him; he takes off his coat, and hangs it with loving care upon the back of the chair.*]

MRS. CONNELLY. Does he — does he take this for a dressin'-room?

LEVRAUT [*removing his waistcoat, a Parisian creation of gaudy hues*] Avec votre permission, Madame. Il fait chaud aujourd'hui.

MRS. CONNELLY. Is it his — Eminence's in — instructions that this Eyetalian renegade is to be allowed to undress in this kitchen, Father Anselm?

[*Levraut folds the waistcoat, and lays it across the back of the chair. Then he bends over the suitcase, fussing with the straps and catch.*]

FATHER ANSELM. Don't be alarmed, Mrs. Connelly; I dare say the man is only getting ready to go to work. He probably wears a white jacket, you know, or something of the sort.

LEVRAUT [*finding the catch recalcitrant*] Sacré mille cochons! Quel mauvais anneau! Pouah!

Mrs. Connelly [*turning her back upon Levraut*] Then all I can — say is, the sooner he puts it on, the better. Not in fifteen years have I been af — fronted with the sight of a man in his shirt. — An' in me own kitchen, at that!

Levraut [*getting the suitcase opened at last*] Ah! Bon! [*He takes out of it a white jacket and cap; the cap he puts on; the jacket he lays carelessly on the table; he tries to remove the detachable cuffs which adorn his wrists, but finds them too stiffly starched.*]

Mrs. Connelly. Mark my words, Father Anselm, his Eminence shall hear of this — outrageous conduck! An' him knowin' I can't abide a man in me kitchen!

Father Anselm. I'm sorry, Mrs. Connelly, but it can't be helped; Monsignor Manducci is a highly honored guest, you know, and we must do all in our power to make his visit agreeable.

[*Mrs. Connelly makes that sound, indicative of sarcastic contempt, generally described as "sniffing" though it is really an exhalation of the breath, vocalized.*]

Levraut. Cette maudite manchette! Le diable l'emporte! [*Suddenly coming around to confront Mrs. Connelly, and thrusting his arm in front of her*] Ayez la bonté de délier ces manchettes-ci, s'il vous plaît, Madame. Je ne le puis faire, moi!

Mrs. Connelly [*sternly, waving him away*] Git away, you miserable Eyetalian monkey! Shovin'

your dirty paws under the nose of a respectable widow-lady! You an' your boudoir-cap! Git away, I tell ya!

LEVRAUT [*turning away from her in disgust*] Tiens! Je l'ai oublié! Tu ne parles pas français, vieille vache que tu es! [*He begins fussing at his cuff again.*]

FATHER ANSELM [*coming forward*] Est-ce que je peux vous aider?

LEVRAUT [*hastening to meet him*] Ah, mon Père, vous êtes trop gracieux! [*Father Anselm proceeds to unfasten and remove the cuffs; the chef has his back to the door down-stage.*]

MRS. CONNELLY [*looking on disdainfully*] Oh, that's what he was after, is it? A nice cook he mus' be, an' can't even undo his own cuffs! Unless maybe he's been drinkin'! Which if I thought it, he shouldn't stay in this kitchen a single minute!

KATHLEEN [*entering, carrying a box of spaghetti*] Here's all I could find, Mrs. Connelly. It was on the top shelf, hid away behind some boxes.

LEVRAUT [*twisting his head around to look at the new arrival*] Ha! Nom d'une chatte! Une jolie jeune fille! Qui est-elle, M. mon Père?

FATHER ANSELM [*frigidly*] L'assistante de la cuisinière.

LEVRAUT. Vraiment? — Mais elle est bien jolie, toutefois.

MRS. CONNELLY. Go back for a minute, Kathleen. It's not proper for a young girl like you to watch this Eyetalian monkey takin' off his clothes. I'll call you when he's finisht.

KATHLEEN [*summoning her courage*] Please, Mrs. Connelly, jest a minute. I want to ask his Reverence about somethin'.

FATHER ANSELM [*horribly busy with the cuffs*] Not just now! I've — ah — no time.

KATHLEEN [*imploringly*] Please, your Reverence. It's about a dispensation.

FATHER ANSELM. Good gracious! Can't you *see* that I'm busy? Some other time!

MRS. CONNELLY. Did you hear what I said, Kathleen? Git out o' here this minute! [*As Kathleen departs with lagging steps*] Dispensation indeed!

KATHLEEN [*still continuing toward the downstage door, but speaking with considerable spirit, despite a teary voice*] I guess there's nothin' to be ashamed of in wantin' a dispensation.

MRS. CONNELLY. Don't you talk back to me, you minx! [*Kathleen goes out, leaving the door ajar; Mrs. Connelly speaks loftily to the circumambient air*] The idear of a young girl like her wanting a dispensation! Why, at her age, I was as — innocent as a lamb. The world gits wickeder and wickeder every year, I do believe. It's pos — itively un — unspeakable.

LEVRAUT [*who has turned back to face Father Anselm*] Pourquoi la petite part-elle?

FATHER ANSELM. Je ne sais pas. [*Handing him the cuffs*] Voilà.

LEVRAUT. Mille remercîments, mon Père. [*He goes to the table up-stage, places his cuffs on the chair beside his hat, and rolls up his shirt-sleeves.*]

FATHER ANSELM. Il n'y a pas de quoi. — I am going now, Mrs. Connelly. See that this man has everything he needs, if you please, and try to make him feel at home. [*Mrs. Connelly "sniffs" as before*] — Je m'en vais maintenant, M. Levraut. Vous trouverez ici tout ce qu'il vous faudra, je crois.

LEVRAUT. J'en suis bien sûr, mon Père. [*Bowing*] Grand'merci pour toutes vos bontés.

FATHER ANSELM [*going*] Oh, pas de quoi, pas de quoi, mon ami. — Remember, Mrs. Connelly. [*Mrs. Connelly emits a grunt which might be construed to mean almost anything, provided it were not anything in the nature of a guarantee of obedience*] — Au revoir, M. Levraut.

LEVRAUT [*as Father Anselm goes out*] Au 'voir, mon Père. [*He puts on and buttons the white jacket.*]

MRS. CONNELLY. All right, Kathleen. [*Kathleen enters, and crosses to Mrs. Connelly, tendering her the box of spaghetti*] Don't give it to *me!* The likes of Bridget Connelly isn't good enough to cook dinner for this here Cardinal Manducci! [*With scornful laughter*] Oh no! My Lord Cardinal Manducci couldn't possibly eat the same — food as his Eminence! It might poison him! He has to have his own tchef, if you please, to fix his Eyetalian eatin's! [*As Kathleen stands before her, hesitant as to what disposal to make of the spaghetti*] Don't stand there like a fool, girl! Give it to his majesty in the boudoir cap!

KATHLEEN [*too preoccupied with her own*

*troubles to be interested in the anomaly of a man in Mrs. Connelly's domain; going to Levraut, who is getting various saucepans, condiment-bottles, and paper-wrapped packages out of the suitcase, and offering him the box*] Here.

LEVRAUT [*taking the box, and examining it*] Qu'y a-t-il, ma petite?

KATHLEEN [*staring*] Here. Spaghetti.

LEVRAUT [*turning to face her*] Ah! Spaghetti! Oui, oui, oui; mais certainement! C'est très gentil à toi, ma chérie. [*Handing the box back to her*] Mais je n'en ai pas besoin. Nous en apportons le vrai italien. [*Picking up one of his packages, and tearing the paper, so that she can see the contents*] Cà! Le voilà.

KATHLEEN. He's got some, Mrs. Connelly.

MRS. CONNELLY [*bitterly*] Ours ain't good enough for his beautiful Eyetalian cardinal, I suppose! But what can ya expect! Comin' here with his own private tchef, an' him dressed up like he was going to a fancy-dress ball! [*With great hauteur*] It's hardly to be expected as such an elegant gentleman would eat common American spaghetti! — Well, put it back, Kathleen; put it back. An' then git on with the biscuit-dough.

[*Kathleen goes out. Mrs. Connelly pretends to read, while keeping a hostile eye on Levraut. Levraut carries several of the packages, saucepans, and condiment-bottles to the table downstage, humming "Madelon" cheerfully the while; finding himself cramped for room, he lifts the yel-*

*low bowl carefully, and sets it at the up-stage end of the table; then he goes to the sink to fill a saucepan with water; Mrs. Connelly gets up, leaving her book on the table between the windows; with heavy tread she goes to the other table, picks up the bowl, and plants it firmly where it was before, in the middle of the table, sweeping Levraut's culinary paraphernalia ruthlessly aside; he turns in time to see what is going on, expands his chest, and scowls angrily, muttering*] Sacré mille cochons! Tu feras comme ça, hein? Vieille vache! Nous verrons! [*Mrs. Connelly, stern determination written in every line of her face, takes several steps back from the table, and watches to see what the enemy will do; he proves himself worthy of her metal, going straight to the table (the saucepan of water he leaves standing in the sink) lifting the bowl, and setting it down on the up-stage end of the table with a crash which would be fatal to any but the stoutest crockery; then he places both hands on the edge of the table (he is standing to the right of it, his back toward the wall), and thrusts his head forward provokingly, as if to dare his antagonist to do something about it! With blazing eyes, Mrs. Connelly goes to the table, and would lift the bowl, to replace it, but Levraut also lays hands on it, holding it firmly on the table.*]

Mrs. Connelly. Leave go o' this bowl, ya dressed-up monkey!

Levraut. Sapristi! Je t'apprendrai de la politesse, souillon que tu es!

MRS. CONNELLY. You better leave go!

LEVRAUT. Va-t-en!

MRS. CONNELLY. We'll see! [*Letting go the bowl, she leans across the table and slaps Levraut on the cheek with the palm of her hand*] There!

LEVRAUT [*clapping a hand to the injured cheek, and crying out with pain*] Ah! Sacreé putain! Tu me frapperas la jumelle, hein! Bien! J'irai tout de suite à Mgr. Manducci! [*He crosses to the door up-stage*] Tu me payeras cet outrage! Attends donc! [*He goes out, not closing the door behind him, and his voice is heard off-stage, growing fainter and fainter*] Nom de Dieu! Ça lui coûtera sa place! Maudite mégère! Nous verrons! Sacre mille cochons! Un beau ménage, celui-là! Mais nous verrons!

MRS. CONNELLY [*as his voice dies away in the distance*] An' ya needn't come back, neither! I want no men in me kitchen! An' what's more, I'll *have* none! [*She puts the yellow bowl back in the middle of the table, then gathers up the chef's paraphernalia and carries them to the table up-stage, where she throws them recklessly into the suitcase. She closes the suitcase, and is carrying it to the up-stage door when Kathleen enters through the other.*] Kathleen, bring that Eyetalian's hat an' coat out here. [*With unquestioning obedience, Kathleen gets the various garments from the chair, and carries them to the door; Mrs. Connelly pitches the suitcase out, and signs to Kathleen to do the same with the clothes; Kathleen deposits them gently on the floor, beside*

*the suitcase*] There! [*Leaving the door wide open, she stands with arms akimbo, triumphantly regarding the yellow bowl*] I'll teach 'em who's boss in this kitchen! — Comin' here with his stove-pipe hat an' his long-tail coat, thinkin' he can shove things around like the place belongs to him. Him an' his Monsignor Manducci! [*Suddenly wheeling on Kathleen with much ferocity*] What do ya mean, standin' there like a fool, starin'! Hurry up with them biscuits, an' then peel the pertaters.

KATHLEEN. Yes'm. [*She goes submissively to the table right, and resumes her occupation of kneading the biscuit-dough*]

MRS. CONNELLY [*when she has sat down in the rocking-chair, and heaved a sigh of relief; ruminatively*] It can be a lesson to 'em all, to keep out o' the kitchen. Tchef indeed! [*With a final "sniff" she dismisses the subject from her mind, and takes up her book again; her reading is interrupted presently by the sound of little gulps from Kathleen, who is weeping; Mrs. Connelly looks all about for the source of the sound, and when she finally traces it, her face assumes an expression of mingled surprise and solicitude*] Is that you cryin', Kathleen?

KATHLEEN [*between gulps*] Yes'm.

MRS. CONNELLY. Why, whatever's the matter, girl?

KATHLEEN. That d — dispensation.

MRS. CONNELLY. Kathleen, not another word! It's bad enough for a young girl like you to have — committed — such a grave offense as to require

a dispensation, without paradin' your sins in the public eye, so to speak. I'm surprised at ya! [*Kathleen gulps hard*] An' don't cry in the dough. If the biscuits was the least bit too salty, his Eminence would notice it.

KATHLEEN. Yes'm.

MRS. CONNELLY. He's that per — ticular.

[*Kathleen makes no reply, but manages to stifle her sobs; Mrs. Connelly goes on reading, nodding sagely from time to time, in confirmation of the writer's views. Stillness reigns for a while. Then Father Anselm and Cardinal Wheeler are heard, and dimly seen, approaching the up-stage door. In the half-light, Father Anselm trips over the suitcase, and measures his length on the floor of the passage-way; he ejaculates*] Hell! [*The Cardinal, mildly, expostulates*] Anselm! [*Father Anselm scrambles to his feet, then says the least bit gruffly*] Beg pardon, your Eminence. It was involuntary. [*To which the Cardinal, with the intimation of a chuckle, replies*] Of course; of course; I didn't suppose it was intentional. [*Father Anselm answers coldly*] I was referring to my exclamation, your Eminence. [*The conscience-stricken Cardinal hastens to make generous amends*] Yes, yes, my son; I know. Forgive my ill-timed humor. You aren't hurt, are you? [*His wounded amour-propre quite healed by this speech, Father Anselm makes answer in the tone of filial respect proper in a member of the seignorial household*] Oh, not at all, your Eminence. [*The*

*Cardinal says heartily*] Ah, that's good; suppose we go on in, then, and read that rebellious spirit a lesson in hospitality. [*Father Anselm takes a step forward and says*] Mind *you* don't stumble over it, your Eminence. [*The Cardinal replies airily*] I shall profit by your experience, my son. [*And as Father Anselm reaches the doorway, the Cardinal adds*] Besides, I have surmounted more difficult obstacles than a suitcase. [*The younger priest stands aside, and the Cardinal enters. Out in the passage-way, he was seen as a vague, shadowy form; now he is revealed as a small, old man, thin to emaciation, and ascetic-looking, but with a twinkle in his eyes; he is clad in his scarlet robes, and looks every inch a prince of the Church as he stands well inside the room, with the black-gowned Father Anselm towering behind him. Unhappily, Father Anselm's own dignity is somewhat marred by the fact that he carries in his left hand M. Levraut's silk hat, which has every appearance of having been a hard-used buffer between Father Anselm and the floor; also, there are dusty areas about the knees and elbows of the good young priest; immediately he has entered the kitchen, he bends over and with his disengaged right hand begins brushing the dust from his knees.*

*The action and dialogue off-stage have not, of course, been without impression on the occupants of the kitchen. At the first sound of approaching footsteps, Mrs. Connelly raises her head, and looks at the door; then, when the crash comes, she jumps to her feet; Kathleen, too, starts, takes*

*her hands out of the dough, and turns toward the direction of the noise; they exchange a glance of pained surprise at the sound of the word "Hell," but thereafter their eyes do not meet; Mrs. Connelly, who dropped her book on the floor at the moment of rising, stands quite still, arms akimbo, regarding the door with a look of grim determination, which becomes intensified at the words, "rebellious spirit." Kathleen, on the contrary, moves tiptoe across the stage, a little at a time, with the light of hope in her eyes; at the moment of the Cardinal's entrance, she is quite close to the left wall, between the gas-stove and the up-stage door.*]

Mrs. Connelly [*with Castilian magnificence*] Ah, walk in, your Eminence. 'Tis a long time since ya've honored the kitchen with your presence.

The Cardinal [*bluffly*] No blarney, Bridget. What's the meaning of this unseemly conduct? Putting the mark of your hand on a guest in this house, so that he's afraid for his life [*darting a glance over his shoulder at Father Anselm*] as Father Anselm can tell you.

Father Anselm [*discontinuing the brushing of his gown, and straightening up hastily*] Yes, your Eminence; he is indeed!

The Cardinal. He was positively pale when he came upstairs, and his words to Cardinal Manducci were, "Cette vieille vache en bas m'a frappé la jumelle." [*Impressively*] Do you know what that means?

Mrs. Connelly. Somethin' dis — creditable, I'll be bound.

The Cardinal. It means, "I, who am a guest, have been denied common hospitality." [*Father Anselm's sense of humor gets the better of him, and he chokes a little; the Cardinal turns to him with merry eyes, but unwavering voice*] — My poor Anselm, you must have got some dust in your throat. Hadn't you better drink a glass of water?

Father Anselm [*mastering his emotion*] Thank you, your Eminence, but I shall be all right in a moment. [*He coughs.*]

[*Kathleen tiptoes hastily across to the dresser, wipes her hands on a roller-towel hanging near it, gets a tumbler, fills it at the tap above the sink, and carries it to Father Anselm. The Cardinal watches her in amused silence; Mrs. Connelly does not move an eyelid.*]

Father Anselm [*taking the tumbler with good grace*] Thank you.

Kathleen [*with something like a curtsey; mumbling*] You're welcome, your Reverence. [*She sidles back to her place near the stove*]

Mrs. Connelly [*officiously*] Maybe his Eminence'd like a glass, too, Kathleen.

The Cardinal. None for me, thank you; none for me. [*Then, as Father Anselm stands with the tumbler in his hand, as if unable to make up his mind to drink its contents*] Drink it, Anselm. It will teach you to control the emotions.

[*Father Anselm, scowling furiously, empties the tumbler in as few gulps as he can manage; Kathleen takes the tumbler from him.*]

Mrs. Connelly. What a grand thing water is. I don't know how we'd ever git along without it!

The Cardinal [*He appears not to be aware that Mrs. Connelly has spoken*] Now, Bridget, tell me what made you violate the laws of hospitality.

Mrs. Connelly. Sure, your Eminence, he called me names; the Eyetalian.

The Cardinal. Frenchman, Bridget; Frenchman, not Italian.

Mrs. Connelly. Which it's all the same to *me*, your Eminence! What I sez is, furriners is furriners. An' the kitchen, your Eminence, is no place for 'em!

The Cardinal. This particular foreigner, Bridget, happens to be a chef by profession. He is quite as much at home in a kitchen as you yourself.

Mrs. Connelly. Not in *this* kitchen, your Eminence.

The Cardinal. Careful, Bridget! Careful!

Mrs. Connelly. But I tell you, your Eminence, he — called me *names!*

The Cardinal. Am I to understand, Bridget, que tu parles français?

Mrs. Connelly [*staring dumbly*] What, your Eminence?

THE CARDINAL [*after an amused glance at Father Anselm*] I am asking why you struck Mgr. Manducci's chef. The real reason, mind! Without paltering or deception!

MRS. CONNELLY [*recognizing that the time has come for speaking truth*] Well, your Eminence, I'll tell you. 'Twas because I wouldn't have him messin' around me kitchen! Him nor any other man! The kitchen, your Eminence, is woman's sphere; an' let all men keep out of it!

THE CARDINAL. Silence, woman! — Anselm, go call the Frenchman.

FATHER ANSELM. Yes, your Eminence. [*He goes out.*]

MRS. CONNELLY [*with owlish gravity*] I warn you, your Eminence, if that grinnin' ape comes back in here, I'll smack the *other* side of his face for him!

THE CARDINAL. You forget yourself, Bridget. —I must have a new lock put on the door to the wine-cellar.

MRS. CONNELLY. Is it a thief you're calling me, your Eminence?

THE CARDINAL. Did I make any such implication? — Dear, dear! I must have been talking to myself. A most reprehensible habit.

MRS. CONNELLY. 'Tis no habit at all! Just a bit of a tonic I take for me liver.

THE CARDINAL. You appear to have taken an over-dose today, my good soul. See that it doesn't happen again, or you and I shall part company.

LEVRAUT [*off-stage*] Mais non, mon Père! Ne me le demande pas! Cette femme me tuera!

FATHER ANSELM [*off-stage*] Le Cardinal le veut, je vous dis! Venez! Venez vite!

LEVRAUT [*off-stage*] Comment? Le Cardinal souhaite ma mort? Quel sanguinaire!

FATHER ANSELM [*off-stage*] Venez, M. Levraut! Venez!

[*But M. Levraut would seem bent on disappointing the Cardinal; sundry grunts and rustling sounds drift in, indicative of a tussle, the recalcitrant chef exclaiming several times*] "Mais non! Non!" [*As she listens, Mrs. Connelly assumes an expression very grim indeed, and rolls up her sleeves in workmanlike fashion.*]

THE CARDINAL [*shaking a warning finger at Mrs. Connelly*] Mind, Bridget, no more nonsense!

MRS. CONNELLY. He better keep out o' here, then!

THE CARDINAL. If you dare to lay the weight of a finger on the man, I shall discharge you!

MRS. CONNELLY [*regarding her right hand wistfully*] Sure, your Eminence, you'd never fire Bridget Connelly on account o' the likes of *him!*

THE CARDINAL. You heard what I said, Bridget.

MRS. CONNELLY [*regretfully*] Very well, then. When your Eminence talks like that, there's nothin' more to be said. [*She begins unrolling her sleeves, and walks toward the door rear as Father Anselm shoves in the reluctant chef, whom she*

*addresses with the venom which she dares not show toward her employer*] — Come on in, ye scut! Come in, I tell you!

LEVRAUT [*recognizing the tone of her voice, and not the words*] A moi! Au secours! [*And wheeling with lightning-like rapidity, he breaks away from the grasp of Father Anselm, and dashes out.*]

MRS. CONNELLY [*turning with some indignation to the amused Cardinal*] I never touched him, your Eminence! So help me God, I didn't!

THE CARDINAL. You see, Bridget, we must avoid the appearance of evil. — What's to be done, Anselm? The man seems in a panic.

FATHER ANSELM. He is, your Eminence. He vows he won't enter the kitchen while Mrs. Connelly is in it.

THE CARDINAL. A pretty state of affairs, upon my word! [*And he paces back and forth in perturbation.*]

MRS. CONNELLY [*virtuously*] I've done all I can do, your Eminence. You heard me tell him to come in, with your own ears.

THE CARDINAL. Yes, yes! I know. — It looks, Anselm, as if my guest must go without his spaghetti, or we without our dinner.

ANSELM [*with a sigh*] A difficult — ah — alternative, your Eminence.

THE CARDINAL. Precisely. Have you nothing to suggest?

ANSELM. Well, your Eminence, I dare say Mgr. Manducci can survive without spaghetti.

The Cardinal. Not good enough, Anselm. — The laws of hospitality! The laws of hospitality. — Seeing that you created the difficulty, Bridget, maybe *you* can suggest a way out.

Mrs. Connelly. Beggin' your Eminence's pardon, I must ask to be ex — cused. I wash me hands of the whole business. 'Tis most distasteful.

The Cardinal. A vexed question! Bless my soul, a vexed question!

[*There is an awkward pause.*]

Kathleen [*with extreme diffidence, and frightened at the sound of her voice*] Your Eminence — I — I —

The Cardinal. Yes! *You* have something to offer?

[*But Kathleen is frightened and confused, and cannot go on.*]

Mrs. Connelly. Don't keep his Eminence waitin', girl! Speak up!

Father Anselm. You needn't hesitate, child. What were you going to say?

Kathleen [*almost too frightened to speak*] Nothin', your Reverence.

Mrs. Connelly. No fibs, Kathleen! What was you startin' to say?

Kathleen [*desperately*] If you go home, Mrs. Connelly, the Eyetalian gentleman'd come back an' fix the spaghetti, an' I could git the rest of the dinner.

MRS. CONNELLY [*indignant and astounded*] *You* git dinner! *You?*

KATHLEEN. Yes'm. Why not?

THE CARDINAL. Do you think you can, child?

KATHLEEN. Oh yes, your Eminence. I'm sure I can.

THE CARDINAL [*jubilantly*] Out with you, Bridget!

MRS. CONNELLY [*in deep anger*] Is *she* to have my place, your Eminence?

THE CARDINAL. You are suspended until the departure of our guests.

MRS. CONNELLY. Holy Saints in Heaven!

THE CARDINAL [*as she shows signs of a new outburst*] No impudence, Bridget! Off with you!

MRS. CONNELLY [*after a struggle, as he looks firmly but pleasantly at her*] Very good, your Eminence. [*Recovering a little*] But don't blame Bridget Connelly if the biscuits is heavy! [*And she stalks out.*]

THE CARDINAL [*a little amused*] What about that, child? Can you make biscuits?

KATHLEEN. I was mixin' the dough when you come in, your Eminence.

THE CARDINAL. Child, you *are* a treasure! [*Taking Anselm's arm, he starts for the door rear*] If ever you need a favor of me, you have only to ask it.

KATHLEEN. Oh, your Eminence, I do want a very great favor of you! A friend of mine and I —

THE CARDINAL [*with a courteous gesture*] My

guest is waiting. Tomorrow you shall tell me about it. [*As he sees her face fall*] But whatever it may be, it is granted. [*The Cardinal and Anselm go out; and Kathleen, as they leave, blows an ecstatic kiss heavenward.*]

CURTAIN

# A FLITCH OF BACON

## AN 18TH CENTURY COMEDY

BY

ELEANOR HOLMES HINKLEY

## CHARACTERS

A Country Squire
Dick, *his nephew*
Lucas, *An old retainer*
Adam, *A young husband*
Susan, *A young wife*
Jack, Hal, *Comrades of the Lichfield Hunt*

First produced by The 47 Workshop, March 7 and 8, 1919.
Copyright, 1919, by Eleanor Holmes Hinkley.
Permission for amateur or professional performances of any kind must first be obtained from The 47 Workshop.

# A FLITCH OF BACON

TIME: *The eve of the Lichfield hunt.* SCENE: *A shallow set. Dark panelled walls. Rear centre, a large fireplace: from it hangs a huge flitch of bacon. On either side of the fireplace, a heavy chair of carved oak. No other furniture of any description. Over the fireplace, a stag's head. Over each chair, a hunting picture. To the right, a door to the library. To the left, a door to the servants' hall. Dark hangings to both doors. As the curtain rises sound of loud merriment. Discovered four men in hunting jackets. All hold glasses of wine. Three stand a bit to the right, the fourth — the host — a little to the left. The three are gay, impertinent young dogs, the fourth a domineering country squire of forty. In the door-way right, stands an old retainer with a leather apron. He holds a large bowl of wine.*

SQUIRE [*thickly*] Here, Lucas! pass the wine again!

[*Lucas passes the bowl.*]

[*Quick on one another, with rising volume*]

DICK. Uncle, a toast!

HAL. A toast!

JACK. A toast.

[*Lucas draws back right.*]

Squire [*holding up glass*] To every bachelor in England!

Dick, Jack, Hal. To every bachelor in England!

Lucas [*a moment after the others*] To every bachelor in England [*shaking head*] God bless the lucky devils. [*All laugh.*]

A Shrill Voice [*off left*] Lucas! Lucas!

[*Old man trembles, and hobbles toward the door left. All laugh.*]

Dick. Hurry "Lu-cass"! Your wife is calling!

Hal. Egad, but the fellow can run!

Jack. He fears the vixen's tongue!

Squire. And heavy hand!

[*More laughter.*]

Lucas [*turns in door*] A plague upon old Betsey! I fear her not!

Voice. Lucas! Lucas! [*Lucas hurries out. As they laugh again, the three men move farther to the right. The host, with his riding crop, strikes a heavy blow upon the flitch of bacon.*

Squire. S'death! This flitch of bacon will hang till doomsday, gentlemen. [*They laugh. He flings the whip in the corner as he speaks again*] All wives are scolds, all husbands fools, all unions loveless before the moon has set!

Others. Huzza! huzza!

Squire. Beshrew me, if it were not so, some [*sarcastically*] worthy couple would have claimed the flitch of bacon!

OTHERS. Aye! aye!

SQUIRE. A year and six months now I hung that flitch of bacon in my hall and said to all my tenantry [*loudly*] "That flitch of bacon shall be given to any man or woman, a year and a day after their marriage, upon swearing that they would not change for none other, fairer nor fouler, richer nor poorer, sleeping nor waking, nor at no time." I said it. And the couples who were soon to marry came forward. "The flitch is ours," they cried. [*laughs loud*] "The flitch is ours!" But of that ten, not one has come to lay their claims. Of ten sugary, billing and cooing couples not one! not one! [*All laugh.*]

LUCAS [*re-entering left*] Master!

SQUIRE [*coming toward him*] What now?

LUCAS. Two persons wait below.

SQUIRE. Then let 'em wait till we have drunk ourselves asleep!

[*The Squire moves back to fireplace.*]

LUCAS. Aye, but they come by your appointment, sir.

[*The Squire turns round violently.*]

SQUIRE. They lie! I never set an hour with any man alive upon the hunt-day. Zounds, 'tis known to all my tenantry I keep the hunt-day sacred as the Eastern slave his holy day! [*They laugh.*] Send 'em away. I will have nothing of them.

LUCAS. But sir, they will not go!

SQUIRE. They will not go! Then tell the

scurvy knaves they stay at their own peril. [*Turning suddenly upon Lucas.*] And what the devil do they want with me?

LUCAS [*stretching a lean forefinger toward the chimney.*] The flitch of bacon that hangs upon yon chimney-piece.

SQUIRE [*drawing back, low-voiced*] Egad. Egad. Egad. [*Coming toward Lucas*] 'Tis a couple then?

LUCAS. As pretty a couple as —

SQUIRE. A couple of liars!

JACK [*coming down front*] Villainous liars!

HAL [*coming down front*] Precious frauds!

DICK [*coming down front*] Expose, uncle! bait 'em!

LUCAS. Gentlemen! you would not be so cruel! [*Very slight pause. He advances protestingly, and stands between the three men and the squire, turning from one to the others*] It is the gentlest, meekest wife —

SQUIRE. Aged perjurer! When was there meekness in a wife!

LUCAS. And the lovingest husband —

SQUIRE. There's no such article as love in husbands!

LUCAS. Sirs! I'll be sworn they've never quarreled!

SQUIRE. Egad, I'll set 'em to it, then! [*Giving Lucas a shove*] Show 'em up, you wooden-headed simpleton!

[*Lucas, chuckling, puts up his hand to ward off a box on the ear. He goes out left. The squire*

*stands down front, left, both hands thrust deep in his breeches pockets.*]

DICK [*gayly*] And now for the sport!

SQUIRE [*wheeling round*] Odds life! Dost think that thou art in it, saucy boy?

DICK. You would not turn us out before the comedy begins!

HAL and JACK. Nay! nay!

DICK. I'faith you could not be so desperate cruel!

SQUIRE. Away with you! [*Advances*] When did I promise you a comedy? S'death 'twould be a merry spectacle! three brave gentlemen a watching one poor squire dispose his flitch of bacon! Come, get ye gone! [*He pushes them toward the door left.*]

JACK. Were they to win the flitch —

[*As the squire starts to shove him out, Dick taunts him on the left.*]

DICK [*finishing Jack's sentence*] One would be silent as the grave!

[*As the squire dives for Dick, Hal takes up a fresh taunt.*]

HAL. Aye, if they prove loving now —

[*As the squire pushes Hal out also, Dick again finishes the sentence.*]

DICK. Your flitch will be the laughing-stock of centuries!

[*The squire seizes his nephew by the shoulders, and with much struggling gets him out.*]

SQUIRE [*in doorway*] Away with you! you villainous, black-mailing rascals! Away with you! [*Loud laughter greets him outside.*]

[*The squire turns about. Straightens wig. Folds arms. Faces door left. Enter Lucas.*]

LUCAS. Master — the candidates.

[*Enter a man and a woman — both very young. The woman clutches the man's hand. She trembles as she sees the squire, and ducks. Her husband bobs his head, simultaneously. Both are much awed.*]

SQUIRE [*grimly*] Advance.

[*They come forward, hand in hand. Again the woman curtseys — the man bobs. Lucas stations himself just inside the door left, with a face of smiling expectancy.*]

SQUIRE. Lucas! get ye below.

[*Lucas turns, disappointed. At this moment, the door behind the Squire opens softly, and three heads appear. Lucas catches sight of them, and chuckles. The squire wheels round sharply.*]

SQUIRE. Hey day! is this the way you treat my orders! Here, Lucas, stand by the library door and see that no man enters.

[*Lucas goes to door right.*]

LUCAS [*wistfully*] Outside?

SQUIRE. Outside! you fool.

[*Exit Lucas. Door closes after him.*]

SQUIRE [*turning to them*] Sit down.

[*They look round the room for chairs. There are only two chairs, one on either side of the fireplace, back to the wall.*]

WOMAN [*clinging to her husband's side, and clutching his hand tighter*] Oh sir! may we not stand together?

SQUIRE [*in a thundering voice*] Loose hands!

[*They do so on the instant, trembling.*]

SQUIRE. Stand apart!

[*They draw apart.*]

SQUIRE. Egad, how would you quarrel with her hand in yours? The test lies quite another way. I ask ye, can ye sit *apart*, and still love on? I ask ye that.

WOMAN [*curtseying and trembling*] Yes, your honor.

MAN [*bobbing his head*] An't please you, sir.

SQUIRE. Then sit ye!

[*The wife drops into the left hand chair. The husband into the right. Each is out of range of the other's vision. The Squire folds his arms. The couple watch him in terrified fascination.*]

SQUIRE [*to man, suddenly*] Produce your marriage license.

MAN [*stammering*] My — my marriage license?

SQUIRE [*with a triumphant smile*] To prove that ye *are* wed. And if ye have it not, I warn ye, all is over. I will shut the door upon ye. 'Tis

now or never. Do you hear? [*They tremble visibly*] Ah! you have it not!

MAN [*fumbling in pocket*] Aye, here it be, your honor. [*The man rises and gives the marriage license to the Squire. As the Squire is glancing through it, the man goes to his wife, and furtively takes her hand.*]

SQUIRE [*not looking up*] Your name is Adam, and you have not quarreled with your wife! [*Looks up mockingly. Catches the caress*] Knave, be seated!

[*Adam sits, trembling.*]

SQUIRE. Adam and Susan, if these be your rightful names, listen to my final warning. [*He speaks in a solemn, high-church voice to intimidate them. They tremble.*] Of all the crimes this world hath known, deceit is the most criminal. To deceive your parents is a grievous sin, to deceive your husband a more pardonable weakness, but to deceive your master is a crime so heavy there is no punishment too great. [*He faces them*] Speak out! have ye paid heed to this my exhortation?

ADAM [*trembling*] Aye, sir, aye.

SUSAN. Indeed, we did, sir!

SQUIRE. Upon the strength of it, I ask you, Adam, have you *never* quarreled with your wife?

ADAM [*solemnly*] Never! so help me God I tell the truth! [*Leans forward and tries to catch Susan's eye*] When I look into my Susan's eyes, I could not speak an ugly oath upon my life!

SQUIRE. Sit back! [*Turns to Susan*] And you,

have you the boldness to avow before my face that you have never spoke in sharpness to that clod of earth your husband?

SUSAN. He been't a clod of earth, so please you, sir! And I do love him dearly. He knows I could not speak ungentle to him, no more than I could fly. [*Leans forward, feels surreptitiously for Adam's hand.*]

SQUIRE. Sit back! [*They both sit back with a jump.*] I see that you are hardened liars and not to be dismayed by talk religious. So be it. Zounds! [*comes centre stage*] I will examine you according to the laws of courts. [*To both*] You have been married a year and a day, and have not wished to change with no other, fairer nor fouler, richer nor poorer, sleeping nor waking nor at no time? [*Walks to Susan as he finishes.*]

SUSAN [*eagerly*] Yes!

SQUIRE. "Yes"?

ADAM [*quickly*] No, Susan. Say no.

SQUIRE [*to Adam*] Silence!

SUSAN. No! no!

SQUIRE. At no time have you wished to change with any other wife?

SUSAN [*horrified*] Heaven help me, no!

SQUIRE [*scornfully*] This Adam was your only lover?

SUSAN [*proudly*] No indeed, your honor. I had another lover did woo me.

SQUIRE. And who was he — the fool?

SUSAN. A widower with a farm and six fine horses. [*Airily.*]

SQUIRE. And how many fine children, eh?

SUSAN [*humiliated*] Ten.

SQUIRE [*roaring with laughter*] A handsome offer! [*He crosses to centre*] And you, brave Adam, what cross-eyed hag hath cast upon thee sheep's eyes?

ADAM [*complacently*] There was a farmer's *lass* did ask me for a kiss behind the hay-stack.

SQUIRE. Ah! had you heard this, fair Susan? Your *faithful* spouse hath kissed a wench behind the hay-stack.

ADAM [*shocked*] Nay, but I *did* not! I said *most* firmly, "Your pardon, lady, I am betrothed."

SQUIRE [*laughs again*] Refused a lass a kiss?

ADAM [*apologetically*] She had red hair and freckles.

SQUIRE. Red hair and freckles — seven horses and ten children! So this is why you are content, my precious pair. [*He walks down left thoughtfully. Turns to Susan*] What if a handsome lad looked on thee with tenderness, a gentleman, rich and brave. What wouldst thou do?

SUSAN [*curiously*] Is there such a one?

SQUIRE. Aye, aye, perchance. [*Mysteriously*] And perchance he hath seen thee at the church, and perchance hath cried thy name in sleep.

SUSAN [*interested*] How did he know my name?

SQUIRE. Perchance the youth did ask the parson for thy name. Perchance the parson answered, "Her name is Susan. But look on her no longer or you will covet your neighbor's wife." Perchance he bade him leave the country-side.

SUSAN [*quickly*] And did he go?

[*Sound of laughter from room beyond.*]

SQUIRE. Perchance he and his comrades revel in the room beyond.

SUSAN [*quickly*] One of the gentlemen who peeked?

[*Adam, who has been growing increasingly uncomfortable, leans forward in his chair and tries to catch Susan's eye round the fireplace.*]

SQUIRE [*walking left of Susan. Softly*] If ye could have him now, and he did offer honorable marriage, what would ye say? Come now, my wench, would ye not say "Yes, Jack, my love, yes, sweet." Would ye not so? [*Very slight pause. Susan looks very soft and sentimental. Then she catches the squire smiling at her triumphantly.*]

SUSAN. Never! while Adam lived and breathed.

ADAM. There's my pretty chick! my honey!

SQUIRE. Silence! [*Turns to Adam*] Were you to learn that Betsey with her money bags would give them all to you, if you would leave your wife for one short hour and give to her those honeyed smiles —

ADAM. *Hath* Betsey money bags?

SQUIRE [*quickly*] You'd come, eh, boy?

ADAM [*hesitates, then sees the look of triumph on the squire's face*] I would not give the hag one smile which is my Susan's!

SUSAN [*complacently*] Aye, aye, thee wouldn't.

SQUIRE [*walks down right*] You fools! You

will not gain a handsome cavalier, nor you a fortune for one smile! But in your sleep you will see wisdom.

ADAM. Susan and me we never dream.

SUSAN. We sleep like little children, sir.

SQUIRE. A plague upon you, sleepy heads! [*Turning sharply round on Susan*] But hold! [*Crossing to her*] Susan, when you rise shivering on the winter's morn, and chop and chop the wood, and build the fire, and make the victuals while your lordship sleeps beneath the eider down, then you are peevish, eh? And when he comes into the kitchen, yawning and stretching his lanky limbs, and says "My sweet, the porridge has no salt," then you begin to scold, eh what?

ADAM [*with approbation*] Susan never forgets the salt.

SUSAN [*proprietarily*] And Adam chops the wood before we go to bed.

SQUIRE. Bah! you hen-pecked fellow! [*Comes to him*] Do you never think [*lowering his voice persuasively*] would God but gently take her hence unto a happier land? At nighttime, now, after a long day's labor, when you sit beside the fire, your aching limbs relaxed, your eyes half closed for sleep delicious, then Susan with her vibrant voice comes to thy side and plies thee rapidly with questions. Does it not rouse your spleen to hear her say, "Where hast thou been to-day, my pet? Where art thou bound tomorrow, lamb? Where are those shillings, sweet, that jingled in your breeches when you left home last night?"

ADAM. But sir, I been't from home at night time.

SUSAN. Aye [*sighs*] and he puts his shillings in a stocking.

SQUIRE. You been't from home at night and put the shillings in a stocking! Egad! egad! you are a precious pair of nincompoops! [*Strides down left.*] But hold! thou art a fool, yet still thou art a man. When you would spend the Sabbath afternoon at the King's Arms, and she would have thee dandle on thy knee thy puling offspring. What then? What then?

SUSAN. But sir! — [*The Squire turns to her*] The baby do not like to dandle. He be backward.

ADAM. We go to company together — wife and me.

SQUIRE. And when you go to company together and have a tale to tell, a roaring, funny tale, how dost thou feel when Susan up and stops thee with "You tell it wrong, my lamb; my sweet, 'twas thus and so"? And all the merriment hath gone before she sets thee straight! What say you then?

SUSAN. He been't no story teller.

ADAM. Susan and me are never comical.

SQUIRE. Egad, you speak the truth at last! Had you the comic sense you could not live together! [*Paces up and down front with growing excitement*] You do not quarrel, for you have no brains, no eyes, no anything to quarrel with! You cannot see the thing the other is! [*In a thundering voice to Adam*] You do not know that she

is brainless as the hen that clucks from morn to night! [*Adam looks at his wife a trifle nervously*] And you! [*turns to Susan*] You do not know that he's a pudding-headed clown that values one base, copper farthing more than all the curls that dangle from your neck! [*Susan looks at Adam a bit anxiously*] Take the flitch of bacon, swine that ye be! [*Moves to centre.*]

[*As the couple rise from either side of the fireplace expectantly, distant mirth is heard from the room right. The Squire starts, and looks right.*]

Squire [*slowly, still looking right*] This flitch is old and — and dry, for it hath hung before this fire for eighteen months, gathering dust and moisture. — 'Tis quite uneatable.

Susan [*in a tone of deep disappointment*] Aye, is it so?

Squire. Hark ye. 'Tis not the flitch you wish [*lowers voice and glances apprehensively to door left*] but a reward of virtue [*sarcastically*] — a reward of virtue for your constancy. [*Laying his hands upon Adam's shoulders persuasively as he faces him*] What do ye say if I from generosity of heart present you, Adam, with half a crown? a crown perchance? [*Moves around to the other side of him as he speaks*] What say you to a crown to put away in that lean stocking of yours? What say you?

Adam [*eyes sparkling*] 'Twould be most handsome, sir.

Susan [*romantically*] But 'tis the flitch we come for, Adam.

ADAM [*joining Susan left*] Aye [*lowering voice*] but a crown is better than a flitch gone stale.

SUSAN. We cannot hang the crown upon our chimney piece to show the neighbors. [*More laughter right.*]

SQUIRE [*hastily*] Two crowns, then?

SUSAN [*still eying the flitch wistfully*] 'Tis the largest flitch I ever seen.

SQUIRE. Three. Three then!

ADAM. Aye, aye. Make it four, and I will take it.

SQUIRE. So be it. I will fetch my money bags. [*Walks down left. Turns in door*] But mark ye, Adam and Susan, make no noise on't, to no one, low or high, for if you gab of this, beshrew me, if I will not throw you out of house and land!

ADAM [*trembling*] We will not tell.

SQUIRE. Wait here and I will come directly with the money.

[*Exit Squire left. The couple hasten together, and embrace, stage centre.*]

ADAM. My lamb!

SUSAN. My coney!

ADAM. The sweet rogue!

SUSAN. Dear bud!

ADAM [*chuckling excitedly*] What sayest my pretty to her love for earning twenty shillings this night?

SUSAN [*quickly*] Nay, chick, ten shillings are mine.

ADAM [*sharply*] How so, my love?

SUSAN. "How so?" [*With remonstrance*] Did I not keep the peace with thee for twelve long months on purpose!

ADAM [*soothingly*] Aye, thou art an amiable wench.

SUSAN [*nestling close*] And thou a good lad to thy coney. [*Raising her head from his shoulder speaks with a grain of apprehension*] Wilt buy me ribbands for my curls, with thy new fortune?

ADAM [*toying with the curl*] The pretty curl!

SUSAN [*drops her head on his shoulder again. Then raises it again. A trifle suspiciously*] Wilt buy them soon?

ADAM. Aye, thou shalt have ribbands [*cautiously*] some day.

SUSAN [*quickly*] Tomorrow, love?

ADAM [*evasively*] I do be busy tomorrow.

SUSAN [*laughing*] Thou needst not choose them, silly!

ADAM [*smoothly*] There be no such haste, my dove.

SUSAN [*breaking away from him with a sudden suspicion*] Art going to put them all into the stocking?

ADAM. My sweet, the man is always master of the purse-strings.

SUSAN [*with suppressed irritation*] 'Tis most unjust.

ADAM [*smugly*] The world is as we find it, love.

SUSAN [*with rapidly increasing heat*] And as we make it, too.

ADAM [*with dignity*] Thou art unreasonable, Susan.

SUSAN. And thou art selfish!

ADAM. My love!

SUSAN [*stamping foot*] Wilt buy me ribbands for my curls?

ADAM. No. The shillings are mine.

SUSAN [*showing her anger*] I'faith, where would you be with all your twenty shillings if I had chose to see you was a pudding-headed clown, a clod of earth!

ADAM [*equally incensed*] Yea! and how of me? What if I chose to look and see you was a brainless clucking hen!

SUSAN [*enraged*] Aye, aye! but hens be humaner than misers! [*Faces him*] I tell ye half that money is mine.

ADAM. I tell ye every shilling is mine. I *will* be master!

SUSAN. I hate you!

ADAM. No love is lost with me!

[*At this point the Squire appears in the door left, and drops back behind the hangings to overhear them.*]

SUSAN [*almost crying*] You tyrant! For twelve long months I've held my tongue, and heard the bacon fat a-frying! [*Pathetically*] There'll be no bacon now at breakfast, and Love is gone! [*Weeps*] Ah! would I were married to that fine gentleman who called me Susan in his sleep!

ADAM [*coming down on her, their faces pushed*

*out angrily at each other*] And I, Betsey with her money bags!

[*The Squire comes from behind the hangings shaking with convulsive laughter.*]

SQUIRE [*at length*] S'death but I have caught thee at it! You thought to blind me with fine words, but I have found ye out. So this is how ye carry on when backs are turned.

ADAM. Before God, master, I swear 'twas the first quarrel —

SQUIRE. Aye, may be. But practice will make perfect, soon. Egad, 'tis the best story I've heard tell, to lose at the last throw! [*Shakes with mirth*] I'll call the youngsters in! [*Starts to door right.*]

SUSAN [*with presence of mind*] Had ye not better put away the money first? There is a strange look, sir, to money bags at such a time.

SQUIRE [*looking down at the money bags, which he holds in either hand*] Aye, that is true. [*More soberly*] I'll put the shillings and pence away. 'Twould look like bribery. [*He goes to door left. Turns in it again, laughing*] The quarrel once begun doth never end. Hey ho! hey ho!

[*Exit Squire left*]

SUSAN. Now, see what thou hast done! Because you would not buy me ribbands for my hair ye've lost ye twenty shillings. [*She moves down left.*]

ADAM [*heavily*] Aye, that I have. [*Moves down right.*]

SUSAN. And love.

ADAM. Aye, that too.

SUSAN. 'Tis a cruel thing to hate like we do.

ADAM. And we begun so loving.

SUSAN. *So* loving!

ADAM. Love's queer. It comes so hard. It goes so easy.

SUSAN. Aye, men were fickle ever.

ADAM. Some say it is a crime to live together when love is gone.

SUSAN [*moving toward him hotly*] Then I will leave thee!

ADAM [*moving toward her with spirit*] God speed thee!

SUSAN. Farewell!

[*Pause. They are now side by side.*]

SUSAN [*heavily*] I must live alone as I did before I met thee, and work.

ADAM [*sighing*] And I must keep myself in victuals like I used to do.

SUSAN. 'Twill be strange.

ADAM. Aye, very strange.

SUSAN. Remembering all that was.

ADAM. Aye, so much that used to be.

SUSAN. And now is dead.

ADAM. And never more will be.

SUSAN. Let us kiss good-bye for old time's sake. [*Shyly.*]

ADAM. Aye, lass. Let us kiss.

[*He kisses her solemnly. He lets her go reluctantly.*]

SUSAN. Why dost thou wait, Adam?

ADAM. We could not leave together, Susan!

SUSAN. I will take one door, then, and you the other. [*Voices again right. She brightens.*] I will go left.

ADAM [*also hearing men's voices*] No, no!

SUSAN [*stamping her foot*] Thou art my master no longer!

ADAM [*pleading*] You would leave me in anger, sweet?

SUSAN [*contritely*] Nay, coney — [*catches herself short in her endearment.*]

[*Susan goes to the door left. Adam goes to the door right. They both look back over their shoulders. They catch each other's eye, and go out. Stage empty a second. Susan re-enters. Looks in.*]

SUSAN [*tragically*] Gone! [*She goes to chair right and buries her head in her hands.*]

[*Enter Adam right.*]

ADAM [*looking toward the opposite door*] Gone! [*He gropes for the chair left.*]

[*Both are now completely hid from each other's view by the wide walls of the fireplace. At the same moment Susan sobs, and Adam groans. Both hear the other, and turn.*]

SUSAN [*rising*] Adam!

ADAM [*rising*] Susan!

SUSAN. I thought you be gone!

ADAM. Aye, me too!

[*They stand wavering toward each other, all but falling into each other's arms.*]

SUSAN [*sobs*] I do not want to go!

ADAM [*gulps*] No more do I!

[*At the same moment they rush into each other's arms. Pause.*]

SUSAN [*softly*] 'Tis like we were lovers again!

ADAM. Better. There's one roof now. Let's go home, lass.

[*Adam puts his arm round Susan. Her head falls on his shoulder. As they move toward the door left, the Squire bursts in. He stares at them aghast.*]

SQUIRE. Kissed and made up! [*Then furiously, as he goes to them.*] Ye fools!

ADAM [*serenely*] May be so, your honor.

SUSAN [*completely forgetful of the Squire. Looking at Adam, rapturously*] 'Tis a wondrous thing to quarrel when you love, and all these months we never knew!

[*They look at each other with delight, and move out left. The Squire stares.*]

SQUIRE [*dully*] Egad. Egad. [*Pause. Stands looking at the floor. To himself*] "'Tis a wondrous thing to quarrel when you love." [*Breaks off. Forces himself into a daredevil mood*] S'death! lies! lies! lies! They do not love! they are not happy! [*With a rip-roaring voice he calls out*] Hie there, my boys, come Jack! Come Dick! Come Hal!

[*They burst in breathlessly, followed by Lucas, who carries the wine bowl. The Squire comes centre stage with a big air of triumph.*]

JACK [*crossing left, unsteadily*] What ho? What ho?

SQUIRE. Behold! the flitch still hangs!

ALL. Huzza! huzza! [*Dick and Hal stand to the right.*]

SQUIRE. Wine, Lucas! wine!

[*Lucas passes the bowl.*]

ALL. A toast! a toast!

SQUIRE [*stepping forward with his wine glass held aloft*] Here's to every bachelor in England!

ALL [*coming forward also*] To every bachelor in England! [*As they raise their glasses to their lips, the Squire, with a sudden outburst of gloomy rage, flings the wine glass from him. It breaks upon the floor. Dick, Jack, Hal start back.*]

LUCAS. Master! [*steps forward*] what now! the flitch still hangs.

SQUIRE [*bitterly*] Aye, but the wine is mouldy.

[*The three comrades start to sip the wine, then, startled, raise their eyes from the glasses, and leaning forward, stare at the Squire.*]

CURTAIN

# THE PLAYROOM

## A FANTASY IN ONE ACT

BY

DORIS F. HALMAN

## CHARACTERS

LISBETH
FANNY
ETHEL
THOMAS
CECILY
ROGER

First produced by The Workshop, March 7 and 8, 1919.
Copyright, 1918, by Doris F. Halman.
Permission for amateur or professional performances of any kind must first be obtained from The 47 Workshop.

# THE PLAYROOM

SCENE: *Interior of a stable belonging to a city house. The door is in the centre, back, closed. One little window is placed quite low in the right wall. All the woodwork is dark, and the light from this one window is much obscured by many embroideries of dust. There is no vehicle of any kind in the place; but, instead, everywhere is furniture, furniture covered with cotton slips, and some merely with pieces of brown sacking. Over the tops of two stalls built out from the left wall protrude the stacked-up legs of chairs. Under the window is a sideboard. The rest of the right-hand stage is taken up by a table, with a rocker and two small chairs, all covered, drawn up round it.*

*At curtain-rise, we see the dim interior. If there is more light in any one place than elsewhere, it is on the rocker, where a very small little girl sits rocking a large doll. This child looks about six years old. She is ideally beautiful, the kind of baby all women plan to have, but none of them quite attains. Even her clothes and the doll partake of this exquisite unreality. In a sweet voice, she is humming "Rockabye, Baby."*

*Then the dusty window is cautiously opened;*

*and another child crawls through, dropping easily to the top of the sideboard, and thence to the floor. It is a pretty little girl of six, with wind-blown hair and substantial, rumpled clothes. She, too, has a doll, of diminutive size and much handled appearance. She stares at the first child.*

THE NEWCOMER. Oh, I never saw *you* before! Who are you?

THE CHILD IN THE CHAIR. I am Lisbeth.

THE NEWCOMER. My name's Fanny.

LISBETH. I have a cousin Fanny.

FANNY. I haven't got any cousins [*She comes nearer, staring at Lisbeth*] What are you doing in here?

LISBETH. I live here.

FANNY. You do not! This is my playroom.

LISBETH. This is my room.

FANNY [*kneeling on the little chair opposite*] I'll tell you what it is. It's my father's barn, really. And he manufactures guns, and he'd shoot you if he knew. How can you live in my father's barn?

LISBETH. My daddy's house is here.

FANNY. Do you mean the chairs and tables and things? *These* aren't my father's. They belong to my Aunt Cecily. But she's an old maid and hasn't got any children, so they're not yours.

LISBETH [*with gentle insistence*] I live in them.

FANNY. Why, you don't either! Aunt Cecily keeps the barn locked up all the time, and I'm the only one that ever found the window. And I

come in almost every day, but I never saw you before.

LISBETH. I've seen you.

FANNY. When?

LISBETH. All the times that you came. You'd sit down on the chairs and talk to visitors; but you never spoke to me. Once you looked my way, and I thought you would; but you said, "Yes, Mrs. Brown, I went to the bargain sale." And that isn't my name.

FANNY. Why didn't you say something to me?

LISBETH. I did call you, but you never heard.

FANNY. I'd like to know how you could sit right there, and me not see or hear?

LISBETH. P'raps it's because you always came in the morning, when there was more light.

FANNY. Yes, I did, but that's nonsense. I could see you a great deal better. And I think you're a big fibber, Lisbeth Whatsyourname!

LISBETH [*patiently*] Then maybe I was in one of the other rooms, putting my baby to sleep.

FANNY. Those are stalls, and they don't look a bit like rooms, the furniture is all piled up in them.

LISBETH. My mother says they are rooms.

FANNY. Have you got a mother, too? Oh, you're just playing house like I am, — aren't you?

LISBETH. I have a mother, and my daddy comes home from work at sunset, every day.

FANNY. It's nearly sunset now.

LISBETH. Yes, I'm waiting for him.

FANNY. Right here, in this barn?

LISBETH. Oh, yes! Mother always comes first, and then —

[*There is a sound of someone at the door. Fanny jumps down.*]

FANNY. Ooh! There's Aunt Cecily coming, and she'll be *awful* angry if she finds us! Let's us hide — quick!

[*She runs into the stalls. But Lisbeth gets down from her chair, smiling.*]

LISBETH [*softly*] Mother!

[*As the key grates in the lock, a man's voice is heard, raised in impatience. Lisbeth turns and goes slowly into the stall. The door creaks into its groove. Afternoon sunlight pours into the barn, lighting up all its incongruities. A man and woman enter from the driveway.*]

THE MAN. You see! The barn's as musty as an old tomb.

THE WOMAN. That's what it is, Tom. The tomb of Cecily's hopes.

THOMAS [*grunting*] Um. — It's darned inconvenient, burying your hopes in a stable.

THE WOMAN. Yes, but —

THOMAS. Stables were built for more practical things.

THE WOMAN. My dear —

THOMAS. You know I'm right, Ethel.

ETHEL. Yes, but, after all, she's my sister,

and I *do* feel for her. Why, I seemed just like a burglar, taking the key from her room.

THOMAS. Nonsense! We've got as much right to the place as she has. Or anyhow, *you* ought to have. Your father left the property to both of you alike.

ETHEL. I know; but she's made it sacred.

THOMAS. She's made a little fool of herself, if you ask me. Roger wasn't as crazy about *her* as all that. Don't tell me a man in love will go to war when his own country's neutral, just because his parents happened to be French. Yet *he* went gallivanting off, at the very start of things.

ETHEL. No matter what *he* thought, it's Cecily I —

THOMAS. Now, look here, Ethel. I hate to be unfeeling; and I'm willing to suppose you can mourn for a *fiancé* as much as you would a husband. But when we first heard from France that Roger was dead, why, that was one thing. If she wanted to come out here then, and moon over the furniture they'd bought for their own home, all right. All — well — and — good. But the man's been dead two years, poor fellow. And we do need a car.

ETHEL. We got along very well without one —

THOMAS. When we couldn't afford it. But three years in the munitions business — Won't you *ever* be able to realize!

ETHEL. Yes, I do, of course.

THOMAS [*walking about*] She ought to get rid of this stuff; or if she won't she ought to have it

stored. This arrangement isn't good for the furniture; it isn't good for Cecily — and it will be good for Fanny to take a long ride every day.

ETHEL. Yes, that's true. And Cecily loves Fanny. We always used to dream we'd have little girls the same age, and I suppose she remembers it now.

THOMAS [*abstracted, measuring things with his eye*] Fifteen feet —

ETHEL. Sometimes she offers me advice about Fanny in the most peculiar way —

THOMAS [*pursuing his count*] Thirty to forty — um — fifteen from that —

ETHEL. As if she knew some other child.

THOMAS [*planning*] We'll have the place cleaned out by the end of the week.

ETHEL. I do dread talking to her —

THOMAS [*rounding on her*] Then *I* will.

ETHEL. No, oh, no, Tom! You'd better let me.

THOMAS [*turning away again*] All right.

ETHEL. When she comes back from her walk —

THOMAS [*investigating*] It'll be roomy enough, I think, without removing the stalls —

[*He goes into one, and we hear him exclaim*] Fanny! [*He comes out with her.*]

FANNY [*giggling*] Yes, papa, I hid!

ETHEL. Why, Fanny! How did you get in?

FANNY. Through the window.

ETHEL [*doubtfully*] Into Auntie Cecily's barn —

THOMAS. Our barn. I guess she can come, if she wants to.

FANNY. Oh, yes, mamma, please let me! It's just the loveliest playroom —

THOMAS. *Some* use for it, after all.

ETHEL. Tom!

FANNY. And there's another little girl says she lives here.

THOMAS. What! Where?

FANNY. She was in the stall with me. Didn't you see her?

[*Thomas strides over and looks in.*]

THOMAS [*decidedly*] There's nobody there.

ETHEL. I guess she means her dolly.

FANNY. No, I *don't* —

ETHEL [*uneasy*] Yes, yes, Fanny, all right. Come, Tom, I really think we'd better go. Haven't you seen everything you want to? Please come!

THOMAS [*going*] What's the hurry?

ETHEL. I must return the key!

[*They reach the door.*]

THOMAS [*grumbling*] You'd think we'd stolen it.

ETHEL. Come, Fanny.

FANNY. Oh, I want to stay.

ETHEL [*very nervous*] But the key, dear —

FANNY. *I* go through the window!

ETHEL. Five minutes, then.

[*She goes out. Thomas starts to follow, then returns to the child.*]

THOMAS. Now, look here, Fanny. Don't scar the furniture, it's valuable. But you come in to

play, whenever you want to — till we start the alterations. Then you'll have to keep out, remember. *That's* the sort of thing you can't go prying into.

FANNY. Yes, papa. And can I have the other little girl stay and play with me?

THOMAS. Who? Oh — [*He looks toward the stall; then pats Fanny on the shoulder, and says, to humor her*] Yes, yes. Where you get your imagination, *I* don't know.

[*Having thus delivered himself, he goes out, shutting the door after him. The barn returns to its former dimness. Fanny goes curiously to the stall, and looks in.*]

FANNY. He said you weren't there!

[*Lisbeth, holding her doll, comes out.*]

LISBETH. Who was he?

FANNY. My father. [*She adds, triumphant*] You see, *he's* a real live person.

LISBETH. Dolls are not real, but I like them. don't you?

FANNY. Yes. Yours is lovely.

LISBETH. My mother made her dress. And my daddy gave her to me. But yours is a nice doll, too.

FANNY. Let's play house with them. You bring your baby to call on me.

LISBETH. But this is my house.

FANNY. Oh, there, you said it again!

LISBETH [*anxious*] Are you angry?

FANNY. N — no. You can have it your way,

this time. Only, remember that next — [*She recalls the parents' talk*] Oh, my! There won't *be* any next time. I guess there'll be so much automobile in here, *we'll* have to keep out. But I can ride in the automobile. And maybe I'll ask you.

LISBETH. That would be very nice.

FANNY [*pursuing her new idea*] I know what let's play. You be Auntie Cecily, and I'll be my mother coming to tell you about our new car.

LISBETH. I don't think I know how to play that.

FANNY. Oh, it's easy! You just sit and say, "All right," to everything I ask you.

LISBETH [*sitting down*] All right.

FANNY [*imitating her mother*] You know, Cecily, Roger doesn't really love you.

LISBETH. All right.

FANNY [*still imitating*] And Fanny's a good girl, she needs to go out riding every day.

LISBETH. All right.

FANNY [*half forgetting the game*] Well, how can she, if you won't put all your furniture into a real tomb?

LISBETH. What's a tomb?

FANNY [*lapsing entirely into her own voice*] I don't know, they have them over in France. [*Then, going on with her part*] Will you let us have the automobile?

LISBETH. All right.

FANNY. That's good, now I must go tell Tom. [*She paces to the door and tries it. From now on, she talks in her natural tones.*] Oh, they

locked the door. [*She comes back and climbs on the sideboard*] I'll play the window was a door. [*She puts her head out, and then hastily pops it back in again.*] Lisbeth! We've got to *run.* Auntie Cecily's just coming out of the house. And she'll be very cross. [*She reconnoitres cautiously*] You hide in the stall again! Go on! [*Lisbeth obeys, but she is not frightened*] And when she unlocks the door, I'll drop down from here!

LISBETH [*calling from the stall*] Good-bye, Fanny!

FANNY [*calling back softly*] Good-bye, Lisbeth!

[*We hear the key in the lock. Fanny disappears, closing the window behind her. The big door moves slowly open. Cecily, all in white, stands on the threshold. The driveway is no longer bathed in sun-glow, but the sky is beginning to take on the pink tints of the sunset. Cecily closes the door and looks about, seeming surprised to find no one there.*]

CECILY [*calling*] Lisbeth!

[*Lisbeth's head appears round the corner of the stall.*]

LISBETH. Is it you, mother? [*She runs out to her.*]

CECILY [*kneeling to hug her*] Yes, darling. [*They come front together. The whole scene is played in half-tones*] Where were you hiding?

LISBETH. In the stall.

CECILY [*as if catching herself*] In the room!

LISBETH. Yes.

CECILY [*sitting down in the rocker*] The sun has almost set, Lisbeth, and the sky is pink.

LISBETH [*snuggling into her arms*] Daddy will come.

CECILY. Home. To you and me. It's very near the hour we have together.

LISBETH. All three of us!

CECILY. And we love each other more than anyone else in the world.

LISBETH. If you loved me very much, you would tell me a story.

CECILY. Now?

LISBETH. Oh, yes, mother.

CECILY. Story-time is after supper.

LISBETH. Well, then, are you going to cook supper now?

CECILY [*laughing gaily*] I think I will. Daddy likes beefsteak, we'll have that tonight.

LISBETH [*delighted*] What do you think he will say, when he opens the door and sniffs it?

CECILY. "Fee — fi — fo — fum!"

LISBETH. Won't he kiss us first?

CECILY [*judiciously*] Well, sometimes you forget to do that, when you've been married a long time.

LISBETH. How long?

CECILY. Oh, — very long. [*Smiling tenderly, she goes back into the past*] When we first set up housekeeping here — [*Her voice sobers and changes*] — two years ago — [*she struggles to*

*her former playfulness*] — you began by being a baby in a long lace dress. I used to rock you. But you couldn't talk, and I didn't like that. Besides, I used to see your Cousin Fanny all the rest of the time; and she did some cunning things, and I wanted you to do them. And other things she did weren't cunning at all, and I knew you could do them so much better. And then, I was always afraid she might come out here some day and find you; and, being so much bigger than you, drop you or tease you or make you cry. I couldn't have that! So you grew up very quickly to your Cousin Fanny's age; and when she had her sixth birthday, you had yours.

LISBETH. The cake was good.

CECILY. Daddy liked it!

LISBETH. Will he be hungry now?

CECILY. Yes. His little girl had better set the table.

LISBETH [*slipping down from her lap*] He always comes before I finish it! [*She runs into the second of the two stalls.*]

CECILY [*looking after her*] Then hurry!

LISBETH [*from the stall*] What will you be doing, mother?

CECILY. Mending.

[*She opens a table drawer, takes out a work-basket, and begins to darn socks. There comes a crash from the stall. Lisbeth walks slowly out to her, guilty and repentant.*]

LISBETH [*stopping by her elbow*] I broke a dish.

CECILY [*severely reproachful*] Oh, you naughty girl — [*she hugs her suddenly tight*] Be more careful with mother's dishes. They're French china, sent by daddy's relatives, for a wedding present.

LISBETH [*returning*] I'll carry every one with both my hands.

CECILY [*mending again*] That's the way!

LISBETH [*out of sight*] Will Daddy scold?

CECILY. Oh, no. He's too gentle —

LISBETH. Is he coming now?

CECILY [*taking a listening attitude*] I don't yet hear his big cane tapping up the walk.

LISBETH. It's time.

CECILY. Almost.

LISBETH. Tell me —

CECILY [*as if commencing a ritual*] First he gets off a big electric car —

[*The door opens, and Ethel stands in the entrance. The sky is red behind her. Cecily starts, trembles, and looks round; then she slips the basket into the drawer, and gets to her feet.*]

ETHEL. Cecily — [*She advances, apologetic*] I'm sorry to come in.

CECILY. That's no matter.

ETHEL [*nervous*] But Fanny told me you were here.

CECILY. How did she know?

ETHEL. She — must have seen you.

CECILY [*looking at her*] What's the trouble, Ethel?

ETHEL [*in a tone of deep sympathy*] My dear, do you think this is right?

CECILY. What?

ETHEL. You — to come here every day — like this. Don't you suppose — it ever worries us?

CECILY. Us?

ETHEL. Why, Tom — and me.

CECILY [*inscrutable*] That's kind of Tom.

ETHEL. And Roger wouldn't want you to.

CECILY. Don't.

ETHEL. Two whole years — it's making you morbid — it's not healthy for you [*Cecily is silent*] And, my dear! — Have you ever thought how bad it is for the furniture?

CECILY [*slowly*] Tom *would* know good furniture when he saw it.

ETHEL [*nonplussed and getting confused*] I don't see what that's got to do with it. It's the Will of Heaven — what I'm talking about —

CECILY. Not the will of Tom.

ETHEL. You act as if Tom wanted to use your furniture. Don't be unjust, Cecily. He's got plenty of his own. He merely thinks you ought to *store it* — in a responsible place.

CECILY. And then — what does he plan to do with the barn?

[*Ethel is struck dumb for a full moment. Then she hedges.*]

ETHEL. It's for Fanny's good, mostly, although we'd all of us like — to use it.

CECILY [*deadly quiet*] What's for Fanny's good?

ETHEL [*forced to confession*] A car.

CECILY. Oh, yes.

ETHEL [*laughing nervously*] It's a wonder he didn't think of it before.

CECILY. Isn't it?

ETHEL [*rapidly*] Of course, I know that father left the property to us both, and that it's as much yours as ours. And where we've always had our way about the management of the house, it did seem as if you might keep the say-so regarding the barn. But Tom is possessed to have a car, and it *would* be silly to pay for garage room, when we have this whole big stable being put to no use at all. [*She laughs uneasily*] I believe Fanny *does* use it for a playroom sometimes, but of course *that* doesn't count —

CECILY. Playroom!

ETHEL [*apologetic*] She didn't want you to know.

CECILY [*making an appeal*] Ethel, I — I use it — sometimes — too, — for a playroom. I come here — and live —

ETHEL [*breaking in soothingly*] Live it all over again. There, what did I tell you, dear? It's doing you lots of harm.

CECILY [*standing away from her*] You talk of your child's good. Do you know, if I gave up this place of mine, I'd — I'd altogether *lose* —

ETHEL [*with unintended cruelty*] What have you got to lose?

CECILY [*giving it up, with a passion of hopelessness*] Oh, I won't! I won't!

ETHEL [*nervous*] Cecily, don't say that. Don't make me take that answer back to Tom. You know how he can be.

[*Cecily calms down and stares at her.*]

CECILY [*at last*] Yes! I know.

ETHEL. No peace for any of us.

CECILY [*repeating dully*] I know.

ETHEL [*following up her advantage*] Moving the things will be an awful wrench, but you'll feel better when it's done at last. [*No answer*] It had to happen some day. [*No answer*] Oh, I *am* sorry for you, dear! [*No answer*] Will you let me say to Tom that you agree?

CECILY [*after a very long pause, speaking in a voice half-strangled*] All right.

ETHEL [*meekly hiding her triumph*] Thank you. [*She goes hastily to the door. There she turns to say*] You won't be sorry. [*She disappears, closing the door. Cecily looks round her, dazed. She begins to go about, touching one thing and then another. Lisbeth comes out to her.*]

LISBETH. The table is all set, but Daddy hasn't come.

CECILY [*turning and looking at her with yearning*] Oh, Lisbeth!

LISBETH [*anxious*] Isn't he coming? Not ever?

CECILY [*glancing after Ethel*] Something made him late.

LISBETH [*clinging to Cecily*] Won't he come to-night?

CECILY [*choking back the tears*] Yes, he'll come — to-night. [*Her voice breaks. She sits down*

*in the rocker, and Lisbeth climbs on her lap*] But not to-morrow, Lisbeth. Nor the next night, nor the next, nor ever, ages long. Oh, what shall I do?

LISBETH. Daddy won't be here?

CECILY. No.

LISBETH. Oh, I — I'll cry for him!

CECILY. Listen, darling. You won't have to cry. For you're going where Daddy is, Lisbeth. Mother's going to send you — to him.

LISBETH. Send me away?

CECILY. Yes. I'll put on your white coat, and your little white hat to match. And your doll will go, too, and your wee straw suitcase, and everything that is yours.

LISBETH. I don't want to.

CECILY. Oh, it will be nice there. Some place very beautiful, far off — and throbbing with love — and still. Daddy'll be there to meet you; and you and he will go hand in hand, down to Eternity.

LISBETH. I wish you were coming too.

CECILY. So do I. But I've only this one night with the two of you.

LISBETH. Then Daddy had better hurry, hadn't he?

CECILY. Yes; that's so! Or they'll be calling me.

LISBETH. Let's listen for him.

[*They sit there with heads uplifted, expectant. Then Cecily recommences the ritual, but in a far different tone.*]

CECILY. First he gets off a big electric car —

LISBETH [*happily*] The gong rings for him.

CECILY. And he crosses the street.

LISBETH. Looking both ways for automobiles.

CECILY. Auto — [*She sobs outright*] Oh, Lisbeth, Lisbeth!

LISBETH. You've got to go on, mother. Or he won't come.

CECILY [*with a great effort*] He — he reaches his house, and feels —

LISBETH. In his pocket for his key.

CECILY. And then we hear — [*The tears come again*] And then — [*She checks them at last*] And then we hear his big cane tapping up the walk.

[*Just about now, a tapping sound outside becomes plainly audible.*]

LISBETH. If we listen, we — [*She breaks off the ritual and looks into Cecily's face, puzzled*] What makes it so loud, mother? [*The tapping comes nearer.*]

CECILY. Oh! It sounds so *real*, because we're feeling badly.

LISBETH. It's the last time, and it's different.

CECILY [*murmuring*] It goes pounding into my heart —

LISBETH. Let's keep on.

CECILY. When he arrives at the door —

[*Lisbeth jumps down, and starts toward the door.*]

LISBETH. He turns the key in the lock —

CECILY. And opens it.

[*The barn door goes creaking again into its groove. Cecily comes to her feet with a cry. Against the violet light of the dying sunset, a figure darkens the doorway. It is a man on crutches, in an officer's worn uniform of faded horizon blue.*]

ROGER [*trying to keep steady a voice trembling with emotion*] Cecily!

[*By this time, there is no trace of Lisbeth. She may well have vanished behind some furniture stacked in the shadows by the door. Cecily stares at him, dazed. Then one of her hands goes groping out for the child. Her voice comes half in a whisper.*]

CECILY. Lisbeth — Daddy never — never wore clothes like that.

ROGER. Cecily — don't be frightened — don't be frightened!

[*He comes down to her slowly, his crutches tapping over the rough floor. She takes a step toward him; and her hand, still groping for Lisbeth, touches the reality of his coat.*]

CECILY [*looking piteously up at him*] It's not — not makebelieve —

ROGER [*trying to laugh*] No, dear. Not makebelieve. But really me!

CECILY [*still in the dazed whisper*] You — [*Then, in a great cry*] Roger! [*She clings to him, sobbing*] Roger! — Oh, Roger! — Roger —

ROGER. Oh, — Ethel should have come and told you first — I met her out there — she —

CECILY [*lifting her head*] No, you! — You only! [*Their lips meet in a long kiss*] Roger, I — how did — when did you — ?

ROGER. Ethel said you never heard.

CECILY. Only — death. And then the years —

ROGER. Poor love!

CECILY. And they wanted to take away our things.

ROGER [*looking about*] The — old — house — that was to be!

CECILY. All I had — a playhouse — [*She sways.*]

ROGER. Let's go out of here. We don't need dumb things any more — and dreams.

CECILY [*as they go upstage*] Oh, Roger — I never heard — I never heard —

[*They come to the door. Beyond them is the deepening blue of early twilight.*]

ROGER [*as they pass out*] Why, it was coming from Germany straight through Holland — and not daring to stop, even for sending word, that made me —

[*The two of them disappear, his voice dying away. When the coast is clear, Fanny opens the window and drops through.*]

FANNY [*from the sideboard, in a hoarse, excited whisper*] Lisbeth! [*She waits for an answer. None comes. She jumps down to the floor.*] Lisbeth! They've gone. I want you to come out and tell me every single word they said!

[*Still no reply. She begins searching through the stalls and shadowy corners, under the furniture, everywhere. The last place she tries is under the rocker, centre stage. Lisbeth is not there.*]

FANNY [*getting up slowly, in absolute bewilderment*] Why!

CURTAIN